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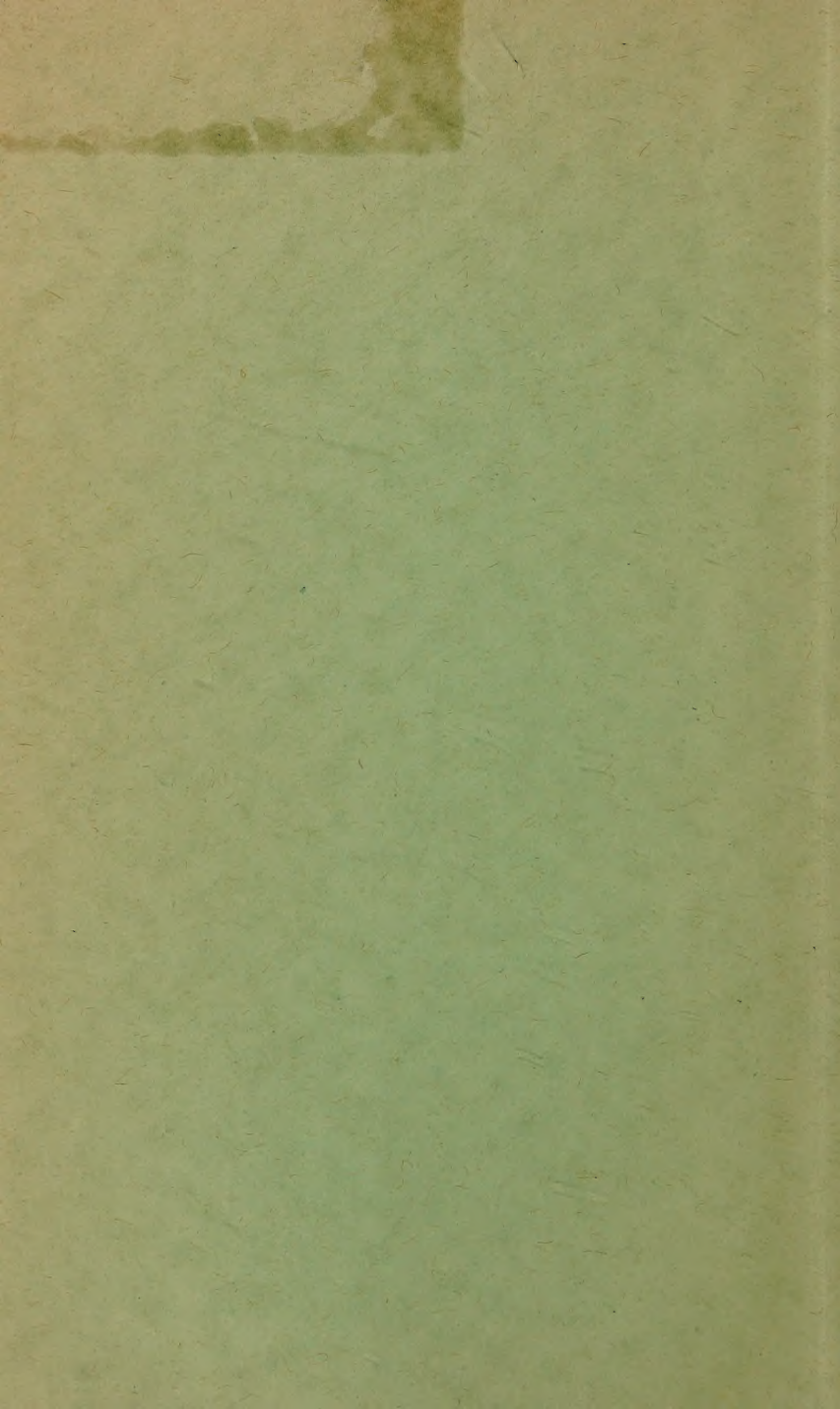


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THE LETTERS OF
MARIE ANTOINETTE, FERSEN
AND BARNAVE



MARIE ANTOINETTE DE LOURVAINE D'AUTRICHE, ROI. DE FRANCE.

MARIE ANTOINETTE, QUEEN OF FRANCE

From a painting by Rossline le Suédois, drawn by Menenteuil and engraved by Roger, 1828

THE LETTERS OF
MARIE ANTOINETTE,
FERSEN AND BARNAVE
Edited, with a Foreword, by O.-G.
DE HEIDENSTAM and translated
from the French by WINIFRED STEPHENS
and MRS. WILFRID JACKSON



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Fersen and Barnave: leur Correspondance" (Paris :
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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

IN the midst of a vast green plain, on the shore of a beautiful lake, reflecting in its blue waters the sky and the distant banks fringed with forests of pine and birch, rises the ancient castle of Löfstad in Ostrogotha. After having belonged to the Fersen family, it passed to the Pipers, through the marriage, in the spring of 1777, of Sophie Fersen with Count Adolphus Piper, Chamberlain of the King of Sweden and Lord of Engso on Lake Maelar.

Countess Sophie Piper was the daughter of Field-Marshal Fersen, President of the Diet during the constitutional reign of Adolphus Frederick, and leader of the opposition during the autocratic reign of Gustavus III. Members of his family, which was renowned for the beauty of its women and the talent of its men, during both reigns held the highest offices at Court. Sophie was the favourite sister of Count Axel Fersen, famous in Sweden and in France, where he served as Colonel of the royal Swedish regiment he had raised, and was known in Paris salons and in the Court at Versailles as "the handsome Fersen" and "the Friend of the Queen," Marie Antoinette. The brother and sister were passionately fond of one another. And the castle of Löfstad, which Countess Sophie having inherited from her father passed her life in decorating

and improving, is, in a way, dedicated to the memory of this adored brother. A portrait painted at Paris by Lundberg represents him as a young lieutenant of the Guard, handsome and with that serious air which charmed Marie Antoinette as soon as he appeared at Louis XV's Court. Another portrait by Breda presents him as Grand Marshal of Sweden under Gustavus IV, wearing the ermine court cloak and the habit of the Order of Seraphim. Here the painter represents as overshadowed by grief the countenance which was never seen to smile after the death of the Queen of France. In the castle park, a monument has been raised to his memory; inscriptions engraved in marble celebrate his virtues and relate his tragic death at Stockholm in a riot of the 20th of June.

In the great library of the castle, among the precious manuscripts there preserved, are two packets of letters which for us possess a special interest. One contains letters from Fersen addressed to his sister during his long and frequent absences abroad. Here he writes to her openly of his love for Marie Antoinette. The other, labelled *Correspondance politique de la Reine*, contains Marie Antoinette's correspondence with Barnave and other members of the Constitutional Left in the Constituent Assembly. Those letters the Queen of France gave to Fersen to keep when the dangers of her position rendered it impossible for her to retain them in her possession in the Tuileries. The packet contains forty-four unsigned letters from Marie Antoinette. The handwriting is easily recognisable and the authenticity undoubted. In the same packet is an equal number of unsigned letters in a man's handwriting, neat, clear and very French, correctly

and elegantly worded. These letters are the replies to those of the Queen ; and on each one is a number added by the Queen's hand and referring to the number of the letter to which it is an answer.

The collection is also inscribed with another notice, this in the Queen's hand : "*An exact copy of all that I have written to 2 : 1 by the intermediary of 1 : 0 and his replies.*" The letters themselves prove that 2 : 1 was Barnave, with whom Marie Antoinette had begun to correspond after the return from Varennes. As for the intermediary 1 : 0, who took the Queen's letters to Barnave and brought back his replies, he has not been identified. His name and rank remain carefully concealed beneath the cipher 1 : 0, by which he is always indicated.¹

Though equally important, those two series of letters are interesting from different points of view.

One series, consisting of love letters, establishes quite clearly the nature of the relations between Count Fersen and Marie Antoinette. They prove that the Prince de Ligne was not altogether justified in saying that the Queen of France was adored but not loved. Fersen loved Marie Antoinette fondly and he was loved in return. But never did he dream of bringing her down from the high pedestal on which he had placed her and where he had surrounded her brow with a halo.

The other letters are political. They treat of such subjects as constitutional monarchy, of the emigrants' attitude, of foreign invasion, of questions touching the

¹ It is more than probable that this intermediary was the Abbé Louis—the future Baron Louis—who was in close touch with the constitutional leaders. Yet there is nothing in the correspondence to indicate it.

peace and the welfare of France. They show us Marie Antoinette as a politician, prudent, of sound judgment and supple mind, capable of controlling her own feelings in the public interest and of adapting herself to circumstances in order to save all that was possible of the ancient and glorious Monarchy.

Thanks to the gracious kindness of the present owner of the castle of Löfstad, Countess Emilia Piper, I am able for the first time to publish this correspondence.¹ And I gladly embrace this opportunity to express to her my gratitude—and if I may presume to say so, the gratitude of my readers.

¹ Extracts from these letters have already appeared in *La Revue de Paris*. Here they are given in their entirety.

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THE LETTERS OF
MARIE ANTOINETTE, FERSEN
AND BARNAVE

THE LETTERS OF MARIE ANTOINETTE, FERSEN AND BARNAVE

CHAPTER I

FERSEN AT VERSAILLES AND IN AMERICA

FERSEN was sixteen and candidate for a commission in a regiment of the Guard when in the spring of 1771, accompanied by his tutor Bolemany, he left Sweden to make the grand tour and see the world.

His travel letters to his sister Sophie, who was but a child of fourteen, are rare, charming and insignificant. He tells her of his journeyings, and comments on the family news she has sent him. From Naples he writes of Vesuvius and of Lady Foster, an Englishwoman in whose society apparently he takes delight. "If it were not for this lady," he writes, "I should be very dull at Naples." From Paris, where he arrives towards the end of 1773, after a stay of two years in Italy and Savoy, he sends her Christmas gifts, New Year's wishes and descriptions of the latest fashions. Of his reception at the Court of Versailles, he makes no mention save in his letters to his father, which have already been published.¹ On New Year's Day, 1774, he is presented to the King at Versailles by the Comte de Creutz, the Swedish Ambassador. He is present at the

¹ See Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen et la Cour de France*.

Mass of the Holy Ghost, and first visits Madame du Barry. On the 2nd of January he goes to see the Comtesse de Brionne, the friend and correspondent of the King of Sweden, and he is admitted to assist at her morning toilet, which highly amuses him; and he takes a malicious pleasure in describing all the minutest details of a pretty woman's adornment. On the 10th of January he goes to a ball given by the Dauphiness Marie Antoinette and very much enjoys himself. On the 30th he has a long conversation with the Dauphiness at the *bal d'opéra*. She is very charming to him; but the courtiers notice it, and she withdraws into her box. So great is Fersen's success at Court and in town, that Ambassador Creutz writes to Gustavus III to tell him of it, and to praise the young Swede's tact, high character and noble mind.¹

But soon all gaiety at Paris and at Versailles is put an end to by Louis XV's illness and death. Court and town are in mourning. Fersen starts for London on the 26th of May 1774.

Towards the end of that year he returned to Sweden. His little sister was then seventeen and a great success at Court. She had become the intimate friend of the little Duchess of Sudermania, recently married to Prince Charles, the King's brother, and the same age as herself. The King's brother, Prince Frederic, Duke of Ostrogotha, had fallen in love with her and wished to marry her. But, despite the nobility of the Fersens, the King regarded such a union as a *mésalliance*. He sent Prince Frederic to travel in Italy, while Sophie, at her father's, Field-Marshal Fersen's, bidding, married the Chamberlain, Comte Piper, and went to live in his castle of Engstö. From the Duchess of Sudermania's *Memoirs* we learn that Sophie Fersen really loved Prince Frederic, but that she obeyed her father in

¹ Goulot, *Un Ami de la Reine*; Jacques de la Faye, *Amitiés de Reine*; F. F. Flach, *Le Comte A. de Fersen*.

order to spare the Prince the sacrifice he would have been compelled to make had he married against the King's wishes.

In her grief she made a confidant of her brother. Axel Fersen sympathised with her all the more deeply because he himself was threatened with a like fate. His father, the Field-Marshal, had arranged for him a marriage with a rich English heiress, Catherine Lyall. Accustomed to obey, Fersen, in the spring of 1778, went to London to pay his addresses to the lady. She, however, refused him on the ground that she did not wish to leave her parents.

"All is ended, my dear," Fersen wrote from London to his sister on the 30th of July 1778. "The parents received me well, but their daughter refused me. She assured me that she could not leave her parents and that there was no prospect of her changing her mind. I insisted, nevertheless; I told her that I would study her wishes in every way, and that my sole object should be to please her and make her happy, but she persisted in replying that the grief of leaving her parents would be too great, and that she could not bring herself to it. This she told her father, who spoke to me about it, telling me how sorry he was, and paying me a thousand compliments. He assured me that he was my friend and asked me to regard him as such. I must write to my father, and I shall be obliged to tell him this news. I shall be extremely sorrowful if it grieves him, but I have done my best. The girl is very amiable, talented, good looking, charming and sweet tempered. I know what I am losing, yet I cannot help rejoicing in my sorrow, for I know by experience the sadness of leaving one's parents and the land one loves. I should easily console myself for my loss if I were sure that my father would do the same." In conclusion he adds: "I want to go to Paris to work with Creutz, or to join the army. The latter I should prefer, but to whatever my father decides, I shall agree with pleasure."

And he sets out for Paris in the hope of entering the French Army. The romance of his life is about to begin.

When Fersen was presented by Creutz to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the Queen smiled upon him, saying, "Ah! it is an old acquaintance!" Straightway he was admitted to the select Trianon circle. He was present at all the intimate parties given by the Queen, the Princesse de Lamballe and Madame de Polignac. He was in high favour. Creutz wrote to Gustavus III that the Queen could not take her eyes off him. Marie Antoinette was much impressed, and as she looked at him, she would sing the line from *Dido*: "Ah! what a happy thought led me to admit you to my Court."¹

Fersen soon understood. He felt his own heart touched. Love was dawning in his heart. Then he determined to flee, to hide his love from all, from the Queen especially. The courtiers talked to him of his conquest. He replied that he did not know of one, and that he did not seek to make any. He asked permission to serve in the approaching campaign against the English.

Creutz, who had some idea of what was going on, did his best to help him. Fersen was appointed aide-de-camp to Marshal de Vaux and set out with him to embark at Havre, whence he was to take part in an attack on the English coast. Thence he writes to his sister:

"At the Havre, 18 September 1779.

"MY DEAR SISTER,—Your letter of the 17th of August reached me two days ago. I will not describe to you all the pleasure it gave me. It is a pleasure which is renewed with greater intensity every time I hear from you. Yes, my dear sister, my only happiness is to love you and to know that your affection for me is as ardent and as tender as mine for you. Do not be anxious about me, dear:

¹ "Ah! que j'ai été bien inspirée en vous admettant à ma cour."

I am running no danger in the war. My position as aide-de-camp does not expose me to any risk. For some time there has been a question as to whether our expedition will take place. The season is drawing on and we have done nothing. Many people believe that we shall not go. I don't know what to think. I fear and I hope. Now it is said that we shall embark next month. I hope to God that we shall. I should be inconsolable if the expedition never came off. Come what may, we shall endeavour to effect a landing on the English coast very early next year. Farewell, my dearest of comrades. Love me as much as I love you.

"Our Stedingk,¹ he who is the Queen's (of Sweden) chamberlain, and who went to America, has distinguished himself there at the taking of Granada. His brother, who was with the fleet, has also done well, and M. le Comte d'Estaing has just asked for *la croix de Mérite* for them both. I have sent my father a copy of the letter which the Vice-Admiral wrote about them to Count Creutz. It is very flattering, for the elder especially, and I rejoice for him. I wish I deserved to have such a letter written about me."

He was longing to do valiant deeds, to brave danger, to win renown. And the words of this letter, his heart overflowing with affection, his longing to be loved, the melancholy which overshadowed it, do they not reveal a heart which suffers, which dares not confess its secret, which wants to be pitied and consoled?

Fersen's fears that the expedition would never take place were justified. The project of landing on the English coast and "hoisting the white flag in the midst of the insolent nation" was abandoned.

Fersen returned to Paris. But he resolved not to stay

¹ Count Stedingk, a Swedish officer who had taken service as a volunteer under Count d'Estaing, and was fighting in America.

there. In order to obtain permission to enter Rochambeau's army, which was starting to fight for the American rebels, Fersen moved heaven and earth. Thanks to M. de Vergennes, a friend of his father, with whom he had become intimate during his long residence in Sweden as French Ambassador, Fersen, in March 1780, was appointed aide-de-camp to Rochambeau. He was about to embark at Brest when he wrote to his sister on the 4th of April :

“ Here I am, my dear, at the end of the first stage of my journey. I started from Paris on the 23rd of March, but bad roads and bad horses caused me to spend six days over a journey which, under more favourable circumstances, would only take three or four. I am perfectly delighted to think that we are really going to start, that I am off to the war, where I may at length do something. I am very well treated by everyone here. The General, who knows my father well,¹ is very kind to me, and there are six of us who are his aides-de-camp. We are busy all day long ; it is only the evenings that are a bit tedious. The society of Brest is not gay. But we shall soon have entertainment in the theatre which is about to open. There are many young men from Paris and the Court who are colonels in the army and aides-de-camp. I get on well with them ; they are very friendly, and we often sup together. It is one of my comrades, the Comte de Damas, who entertains us to supper. He stays with his uncle, who is a sea captain, and uses his house, for the uncle is at Paris. It is there that we take our recreation after the labours of the day. We shall all be on board by the 8th, and we are to set sail on the 12th or 13th. We don't yet know where we are going, but wherever it is, be sure, dear Sophie, that I shall constantly think of you, love you and cherish you as my best friend . . .”

¹ Field-Marshal Fersen had once served in the French Army.

He embarked on board the *Jason*, but his departure was delayed, and he wrote again on the 27th of April :

“ On board the ‘ *Jason*,’ in the
harbour of Brest, the 27th of
April 1780.

“ I think, dear, that I have already acknowledged the receipt of your letter of the 24th of March, but I can never tire of telling you what pleasure it gave me. That pleasure increases and intensifies every time I mention it. My only regret is that I shall be without news so long. But love me and do not forget a brother who will love you tenderly all his life.

“ I have no news to tell you. We are still on board, and are forbidden to land unless for something very urgent. As you may imagine, that *something* happens to, or is invented by, everyone—and it often happens to your brother—I like to go on land ; and as it is, I have quite enough of the ship. Nevertheless, I am in good company. The captain is kind, gay and genial. He has given me a cabin, which I have had arranged in my own taste and whither I can retire to read, write and work. I spend a great part of the day there and like nowhere on the ship better. The winds are still contrary, and to our great despair, no one knows when we shall set sail. The day before yesterday, during the night, the wind changed ; and about three o’clock in the morning, we received a signal to weigh anchor ; but soon the wind became contrary again, and once more we are obliged to wait. We shall spread our sails as soon as ever it becomes favourable again ; and impatiently I await that moment. Farewell, my best friend, A brother who adores you.”

At length the squadron set sail and made for America.

For three years Fersen remained on the other side of the Atlantic. From many places, throughout the campaign, he wrote his sister affectionate, kind letters. He tells her little of the war. That is a subject reserved for his letters to his father; but he tells her of his pleasures and his troubles.

“Newport, this 8th of September 1780.

“I cannot tell you, my dear friend, what great pleasure I take in writing to you and in assuring you of my most ardent and most constant affection which distance only serves to increase. Opportunities of writing to you are so rare that I seize them eagerly and find in them great delight. I trust you have already received the letters I have written from here. Since our first arrival in this port we have never left it, and God knows when we shall. Until now we have been blockaded by an English squadron of twenty ships, but since this morning they have disappeared.

“With my General I have been for a two days’ journey on the Continent. He is very kind to me and I am greatly attached to him. I get on well with my comrades, and everyone is very polite to me; some are quite friendly, and I am very happy. All I want is the pleasure of seeing and embracing you.

“I have already told you of the beauty of this island. The climate is extremely healthy. For a fortnight it has been very hot. But now the weather is perfect. The people of Newport are good and polite. I have not time to make many acquaintances. I visit two or three houses, where I receive a hearty welcome and amuse myself after the day’s occupations are over. In one of them, that of Mrs. Hunter, there is a pretty girl of eighteen, gay, amiable and witty, who plays the harpsichord and sings to perfection. I am teaching her French.”

“ *Newport, 14 September 1780.*

“ I can only write you a few words, my dear sister ; it seems very little to send you from such a distance ; but a little is better than nothing. I am content if only I have the time to tell you how much I love you. My father will tell you the news I send him. It is not good.¹ We are still very quiet here. We do nothing. Sometimes we amuse ourselves, but often we are bored. Among the army men I have my own select little set. It is select indeed, for it only comprises three : the Duc de Lauzun, Sheldon, an Englishman who has entered the French service, and a Colonel attached to the Hussars, and I. We are together as much as our duties permit. From eight till midnight we spend our evenings at Mrs. Hunter’s, the lady of whom I wrote to you, who has a pretty daughter. Lauzun, who is the eldest and the wisest of our triumvirate, retires first—Sheldon and I continue our musical evenings into the small hours of the morning. And we greatly enjoy these evenings.

“ Farewell ; they are waiting for my letter, and I must close. Affectionate remembrances from your loving brother. Ever so much love to Hedda and to Fabian,² a kiss for little Chique³ and a handshake for Piper.”⁴

“ *Newport, 13 November 1780.*

“ No news, my dear sister, since my last on the 16th October. Since the 1st of this month the troops have been in winter quarters in this town, and we are going to remain quite quietly here, which makes me very angry. Several officers have received permission to travel through the

¹ Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen et la Cour de France*. See the letter of the same date to Field-Marshal Fersen.

² Another sister and brother.

³ Sophie’s son.

⁴ Her husband.

country. As soon as they return, I hope to do the same. I hope it will be in a man-of-war.

"The cold is very severe here and the sleighing as good as in Sweden. We have already had some very hard frosts and a foot of snow. This country reminds me of Sweden, and the memory delights me. I am very well and very happy. It is all one can desire. Our triumvirate has lately become a duumvirate. The Duc de Lauzun, with his Hussars, has been sent twenty leagues away, and there he is to stay all winter. Only Sheldon and I remain here. I am sorry, for I love the Duc with all my heart. Farewell, dear friend, love me as I love you."

"Newport, 7 December 1780.

"At length, there is another opportunity of communicating with you, my dear friend. It is one of the greatest pleasures I can enjoy. The joy of hearing from you is one of which I have long been deprived. I ought to have grown accustomed to it, but I know that I never shall. For seven months I have not known what you are doing, if you are thinking of your brother, or even if you are alive. I left you in a critical condition, and I am very anxious.¹ If I had the misfortune to lose you, I should lose everything. God preserve me from such a calamity.

"I have no news to send you from here. What there was I have sent to my father. I am not too bored. Every evening I go to Mrs. Hunter's, of whom I have already written. This estimable woman is full of kindness and attention for me. Her daughter is charming. I teach her French, she teaches me English, and teaches me better than I do her. She already speaks quite prettily. At this house time passes very pleasantly.

"We have just taken a six days' journey, I and one other with the General, to reconnoitre the country. In

¹ She was expecting to be confined.

a few days we go to Boston. There I shall see an American who has come from Gothenburg in forty-four days. I am told that he has brought with him Swedish officers who have gone to join Washington's army. I am very desirous to see them. I hope they will give me news of Sweden. It is long since I had any. What becomes of your letters ? ”

Those which he sends don't always reach their destination. On the 6th of August 1781 he writes :

“ My letter of July 16th was lost, my dear sister ; the boat that carried it was lost on leaving the harbour. I wrote you one on the 26th which went by Boston. I don't know which way this one will go. But I don't mind so long as it reaches you, which is doubtful.”

The absence of news from his family, the long months without a single letter, were his chief trials. Letters become rarer than ever at Williamsburg, where Rochambeau's army was established in winter quarters. All the officers, and the General himself, were so impatient for letters that Fersen was sent as far as Philadelphia to meet the messenger, who was bringing letters which had reached Newport on board a frigate.

“ *Williamsburg, 25 April 1782.*

“ No words can tell you, my dear sister, how happy I was to receive news of you. It comes at last ; and your letters of the 26th of October 1781 from Maelsaker,¹ and of the 14th of December from Ljung,¹ reached me ten days ago. I can't tell you how happy I was. Before replying, I must tell you what has prevented me from writing sooner.

¹ Châteaux belonging to the Fersen family on Lake Maelar and in Ostrogotha.

“As soon as we heard of the frigate’s arrival at Newport, M. de Rochambeau sent to meet the messenger who was bringing the letters. Newport is seven hundred miles from here. Our messenger made good speed; everyone was delighted; and I especially. He brought a number of letters for me, five from Sweden and several from Paris. Ye gods, how happy I was! I was entirely absorbed in my happiness when the General summoned me. He told me to start at once and fetch the official letters. The messenger had only brought the soldiers’ private letters. The official letters from the French Government had been left behind. He ordered me to go to Philadelphia to fetch them.

“I started from here on Tuesday, the 16th, at eight o’clock in the morning, and I reached Philadelphia on Saturday, the 20th, at eight in the morning. I was back at Williamsburg on Tuesday, the 23rd, at eight in the evening. I had travelled seven hundred English miles (seven English miles make a Swedish league). People could hardly believe it. I am told that it is unheard of in this country, where there are no post-horses; where you are compelled to travel fifty miles on the same horse, and where there are seven rivers to cross, some of which are two miles in breadth and badly served with means of passage. This journey has increased the reputation for promptitude which I already had in the army.

“We are still in this wretched little hole of Williamsburg, where we are bored to death. There is no society at all, and it begins to be very hot. With the greatest impatience we await Lauzun’s return, which is to be the signal of our departure. Whether we go farther south, as we fear, or farther north, as we hope, will be decided when he comes. I must conclude, for despite the heat I must go out to work.”

It was farther south that they were ordered. Fersen's regiment was sent to Porto-Cabello in Central America. There, overwhelming tropical heat was added to the tedium of inaction. And still there were no letters. Communication with headquarters became more and more difficult. But as long as the campaign lasted, all he asked was to remain with the army. And this he did until peace was made and the army returned to France.

“*Porto-Cabello, March 1783.*”

“I weary for your letters. They are our only amusement in this terrible country. We are dying of tedium; we are growing thin, we are drying up, we are becoming old and yellow with the heat. There is no resource whatever in this horrid hole, no possibility of satisfying one of the five senses which are given to man in order that he may use them. You come across nothing but blacks—not a single white feature anywhere. It is not for man to live here—only for tigers, bears and alligators.

“We hear that Carácas, which is thirty-six leagues away, is a fine town with society and pretty women who have nothing black about them but their eyes. I hope to go there and see for myself in a few days.

“If the war lasts, I have decided to remain in it. If it ends, I must go, but even then I hope to remain in the French Army. Perhaps I may remain as *colonel propriétaire* of a regiment. Don't mention it to anyone yet.

“I am, moreover, very happy. Everyone treats me well: some through policy, others through affection. All I need to make me happy is to be able to kiss you.

“To-morrow, with Deux-Ponts and Dubourg, I set out for Carácas. We shall be away a fortnight. On my return, I may perhaps hear that peace is signed.”

To remain in the French Army is now the height of

his ambition : to be appointed *colonel propriétaire* of his regiment *le Royal Suédois*, stationed at Valenciennes, whence he might easily go to Paris without arousing too much attention.

Did he now feel sure of himself, or did he think he was forgotten ? In any case, he would hide more secretly than ever his heart's true sentiment.

He had every reason to believe he would succeed in his plan. He would plead the services he had rendered in this campaign, the praise he had received from his chief, General Rochambeau ; and he relied on the support of the King of Sweden, and the goodwill of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

CHAPTER II

FERSEN AS COLONEL OF "LE ROYAL SUÉDOIS"

WHEN the war was over and peace was signed, Fersen returned to France. As soon as he arrived in Paris he wrote to his sister :

" Paris, 27 June 1783.

" MY DEAR SISTER,—I reached Brest on the 17th and came here on the 23rd. I received the best of welcomes. Count Creutz will tell you what may be in store for me. If it happen, I shall be the happiest of men ; if not, the unhappiest. My dear sister, do persuade my father to consent : he would make me happy for life.

" I am writing to him about it ; but do you talk to him in my favour. It is a question of paying down a sum of money. Urge him to do it.

" Farewell, my dear and sweet sister, my true and only friend. Love your brother as much as he loves you."

The sum of money was for the purchase of his commission, and that purchase was of the highest importance to him. It would enable him to stay in France, to be " the happiest " or " the unhappiest of men."

Count Creutz, who was recalled to Sweden by Gustavus III to be Minister of Foreign Affairs, pleaded his friend's cause with the King of Sweden and Marshal Fersen. He gained it with one and the other. He wrote from Stockholm to Fersen to tell him of his successful intervention. Fersen was in raptures. It is obvious from

the letter he wrote to his sister on receiving the good news :

“ *Paris, 31 July 1783.*

“ Three days ago I received a letter from my friend, Creutz, which gave me the greatest pleasure. How happy I am, my dear Sophie ! He tells me that the King and my father have consented to everything. Just imagine my happiness. I have written to-day to my father to thank him and tell him how glad I am. Indeed, I am so happy that I can hardly believe it. I have more than one reason for that. I will tell you when we meet.”

The King of Sweden had kept the promise he had given Creutz. Gustavus III, on the 5th of September, wrote to Louis XVI to recommend the future colonel. His reply was not long in coming. It is dated the 19th of September and is signed, Marie Antoinette :

“ The recommendation which Your Majesty has addressed to the King has been received in the manner befitting its author, Your Majesty, and in favour of so good a subject. I hope that before long Count Fersen will be provided with a regiment.”

Everything, therefore, was for the best. But there was still the question of money. At least 100,000 *livres* were necessary. Would his father undertake to provide that sum ? He commissions his sister to sound him on the subject ; and he tells her of certain financial arrangements which might be made. He only asks his father for a loan :

“ All he would have to provide,” he writes from Versailles on the 10th of August, “ would be the 100,000 *livres*, which he would pay me. I shall have a salary of 12,000 *livres*. I should have to pay 5000 in interest on the 100,000. There would remain 7000 which, with what he would allow me, and the salaries which I receive from appoint-

ments in Sweden, would make a good income, especially if I were to economise by living part of the year in Sweden. This is my project, which I am laying before him."

He was attached to a regiment in Sweden, from which he received the salary of his rank. He intended to divide his time between France and Sweden, economising during his residence with his father to make up for his extra expenditure when abroad.

But his father had another project which seemed to him much better. He wanted his son to marry Mademoiselle Necker, "the richest heiress in Paris." That would remove every difficulty.

Happily for Fersen, Baron de Staël had also hopes in that quarter. Fersen told his father that he could not tread upon his colleague's heels.

"As for the marriage with Mademoiselle Necker," he wrote to his sister, "I have told my father that it is out of the question, for Staël has hopes in that direction. I have, moreover, heard it said that her parents do not wish to be separated from her, and that would not suit me. I often tell him that I don't wish to live always in exile, and I often tell him how happy I should be to pass my life with him. I hope my letter will take effect. It is eight pages long."

Mademoiselle Necker soon became Madame de Staël.

At length, thanks to certain influences exercised in Paris, the all-important business on which Fersen had set his heart, was arranged. On the 20th of September he tells his sister the news :

"My affair is concluded, my dear sister. I am colonel of 'le Royal Suédois' ; but as yet I have not received my commission. Say nothing to my father unless he speaks to you of it. There still remains the question of the 100,000 *livres*."

To settle this delicate matter he decided to go to Sweden. Again he wrote to his sister :

“ I shall start from here on the 15th of September and be in Sweden on the 15th of October. How delighted I shall be to see you, my dear sister, and to talk to you and to tell you what an ardent, deep affection I always feel for you ! ”

But his sister must have been very astonished when she read further that he left Paris regretfully, and that he could not bear the idea of departure.

“ In spite of all the pleasure of seeing you again, I cannot leave Paris without regret. You will think it quite natural when you learn the cause of this regret. And I will tell you, for from you I will have no secrets.”

His devoted sister must have been still more astonished when in this same letter, after having announced the marriage of Miss Lyall, the rich Englishwoman to whom his father had wished to unite him, he added :

“ I am glad Miss Lyall is married. Now I hope to hear no more of her, and I trust that no one will try to find another bride for me. I have made up my mind never to contract conjugal ties. They are contrary to nature. As some day I must suffer the misfortune of losing my father and mother, it shall be you, my dear Sophie, who will take the place of one and the other, and even of my wife. You shall be the mistress of my house. It shall be yours and we will always be together. If such a plan should meet with your approval, I shall be happy for life. I cannot give myself to the only woman I desire, to the only woman who really loves me ; therefore I will give myself to no one. Farewell, my dear friend, my only and my true friend. The post goes to-morrow and it is eleven o'clock. I am going to bed. Good night.”

But this journey to Sweden was to be postponed at the last moment. King Gustavus III, who was about to travel in Italy, had chosen Fersen as a member of his suite. Fersen left Paris on the 21st of September and joined the King at Erlanger on the 20th of October 1783. Gustavus III wrote to Creutz :

"I am very pleased with Count Fersen. In meeting him I experience all the pleasure and interest one feels on seeing a friend from whom one has long been parted ; who has been exposed to great danger and who deserves all one's sympathy."

The Italian journey lasted about eight months. At the end of that time Gustavus III arrived in Paris. It is well known that the welcome the King of Sweden received from the Versailles Court on the occasion of this, his second visit, was more cordial than that offered to him by Louis XV, when he came as heir-apparent. If the old King had been affable, almost fatherly in his kindness, the Dauphin had treated him with reserve, while Marie Antoinette obviously sulked because of the attentions he paid to Madame du Barry and the diamond collar he gave her dog. Quite a different welcome he now received. Louis XVI was geniality itself. Marie Antoinette smiled upon the King of Sweden and greeted him with all her charm. But Fersen was always with the King, his master.

It was only when the King returned to Sweden that Fersen was reunited to his family, after an absence of six years. He arrived at Ljung, his father's château in Ostrogotha, on the 4th of September 1784. His sister, Countess Piper, was there with her children. Fersen then confided to his sister the secret of his hopeless love. She knew the whole story of his hidden romance. Henceforth, without the Queen ever being named, the Countess will understand to whom her brother refers.

On his return to Paris, after this visit to Sweden, which lasted four months, Fersen wrote :

“ I begin to be a little happier, for, from time to time, I see my friend freely in her own apartments ; and that somewhat consoles us for all the trials she is enduring, poor woman. She is an angel of goodness, a heroine of courage and deep feeling. No one has ever loved like this. She was much affected by all you said concerning her, and told me to let you know how much it touched her. She would be so glad to see you. She thinks that if our plan should be carried out, you would come here, and the idea delights her. And it might indeed be possible.”

Later, on the 3rd of January 1785, replying to a request from his sister to send him some of the Queen's hair which she wished to arrange in a bracelet :

“ Here is the hair you asked me for. If there be not enough, I will send you some more. It is she herself who gives it to you, and your desire in this matter touched her deeply. She is so kind, so perfect ; and I seem to love her all the more since she loves you. She asks me to tell you how she feels your grief and how she shares it. I should never die content without your having seen her. Farewell.”

The grief of the Countess Piper was caused by the illness of her youngest daughter. Fersen wants his sister to know that the Queen sympathises with her as tenderly as he himself.

“ She sends you a thousand messages and tenderly shares all your trouble. She weeps over it with me. Ought I not to adore her ? ”

Suddenly a separation became necessary. Gustavus III declared war on Russia. Fersen was recalled to take part in that Finland campaign which lasted two years, from 1787 till 1789. But even before it was ended, the King of



COUNTESS SOPHIE PIPER

From an original painting in Stockholm

Sweden sent him back to Paris in order to keep him informed of the grave events which were coming about. Fersen arrived on the eve of the Revolution. Henceforth he was hardly ever to leave the Court. From time to time he was obliged to return to Valenciennes to the regiment of which he was Colonel, but he always returned hastily to Versailles.

His letters to his father and to his King show that he realised all the gravity of the situation and foresaw what dangers threatened the monarchy in France.

On the 1st of February 1790 he wrote from Versailles to his father :

"How terrible is the situation of this great kingdom, powerless at home and unconsidered abroad. In the European system France is nothing, and within her own borders she is in complete anarchy. All bonds are dissolved. No longer are the laws obeyed, or religion respected : indeed, it exists only in name. The people have been taught to know their power ; and they use it ferociously. Nobles, clergy and parliaments were the first to set the example of that disobedience and resistance to which they now fall the first victims. They are fugitives and their castles burning."

Fersen was with his regiment at Valenciennes when the Bastille was taken ; and in a letter full of emotion, he described this event to his father. It compelled him to return hurriedly to Paris. He was at Versailles on the 5th of October, when the mob came to look for the Royal Family. On the 6th of October he followed it to Paris. On the 9th he wrote to his father :

"I was a witness of all that happened at Versailles on Monday the 5th and Tuesday the 6th of October, and of the arrival at Paris of the King and his family. I came back in one of the King's carriages. We were six and a half hours on the road. God forbid that I should ever again

see such sorrowful sights as in these two days. The people seem delighted at seeing the King and the Royal Family at Paris. The Queen is greatly applauded, as she will always be by those who know her and do justice to her kind heart.”¹

To his sister he wrote on the same day :

“She is extremely unhappy but very brave. She is an angel of goodness. I try to console her as best I can. It is the least I can do, she is so perfect to me. I don’t yet know when I shall go to my regiment. I should like to postpone my departure as long as possible and to wait until things are settled.”

Nevertheless, he was compelled to go to Valenciennes to arrest a mutiny of the troops. This accomplished, he returned to Paris and gave up his commission in order not to be obliged to leave the capital in future. He established himself at an hotel in the Rue Matignon in order to be near the Tuileries. And both his love and his devotion increased. He loved devoutly, respectfully, with a chivalrous affection which increased in intensity as he saw the Queen more and more unhappy, isolated, abandoned by all her friends, exposed to every danger ; and he swore to defend her at the price of his blood and to do everything to save her.

His sister was made anxious by the danger which he himself ran by staying in Paris. He reassured her :

“Persons like me, who do not conspire and who are not public characters, run no danger.”

In reply to the news she gives him of the increasing hostility of the Swedish nobility to the government of Gustavus III, he adds :

“I would soon bring them to reason if I could show

¹ Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen et la Cour de France*, p. 25.

the nobles of Sweden all that is happening in France and the piteous state of this noble realm. Here it seems as if the evil grows greater every day."

Only another reason for him to remain and devote himself entirely to his friend's service.

On the 12th of April 1790 he wrote :

"I received your letter of the 5th, and I thank you for all you say about my friend. Believe me, my dear Sophie, she deserves everything you feel for her. She is the most perfect being I know. Her behaviour also is perfect. It has won her all hearts, and everywhere I hear her praised. You would not believe how highly I prize her friendship for me."

In the increasingly difficult situation of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, Fersen became their factotum. He served as an intermediary between them and persons who remained loyal but who dared not approach them. He ciphered and dispatched letters, and deciphered communications which came to them. There have been found rough drafts of letters written by him, with notes and corrections in the Queen's handwriting.

"My position," he wrote to his father on the 5th of November 1790, "differs from that of anyone else. I have always been treated with kindness and honour in this country both by Ministers as well as by the King and Queen. I have here contracted a debt of gratitude. I am attached to the King and Queen by the numerous kindnesses they bestowed upon me when it was in their power, and I should be both ungrateful and vile if I were to forsake them now that they can do nothing for me, and that I have hopes of rendering them service. To all the other benefits with which they have overwhelmed me they have recently added one more, a very flattering distinction, that of their confidence ; and it is all the more

gratifying because it is only bestowed on three or four persons, of whom I am the youngest."

Of those three or four persons he was the only one at Paris, the only one who could freely approach the King and Queen, who was in daily intercourse with them. Of the other devoted subjects (*dévoués*) the Marquis de Bouillé was at Metz and was obliged to remain there by the disaffection of the troops he commanded; the Baron de Breteuil was abroad on a mission to some foreign power; Goguelat was in the provinces, and Count Mercy-Argenteau at Brussels. The last, Marie Antoinette's intimate friend and the faithful counsellor, whom her mother, Marie Thérèse, as soon as she arrived in France, had placed near her to watch over and direct her, the Revolution had compelled to leave Paris. Austria had recalled her representative at the Versailles Court; and Mercy had been obliged to leave France and resign that part of adviser to Marie Antoinette, which he had played with such tact and astuteness first when she was Dauphiness and later when she was Queen. He had taken up his abode at Brussels, whence he anxiously followed the course of events, and through Fersen sent advice to the Queen whenever an opportunity offered. But Fersen, and likewise the other *dévoués*, would have preferred him to return to his post at Paris in order to be in a more favourable position for guiding and protecting the Queen. They believed that if the Queen asked for him, he could not refuse, and that her brother, the Emperor, would be bound to consent. They had even prepared a rough draft of the letter which Marie Antoinette was to write to the Comte de Mercy on this subject. Marie Antoinette charged Fersen to explain to those who advocated this course what were the difficulties it presented:

"I approve of the letter to M. de Mercy; but the

difficulty is how to convey it to him. I have declared, and everyone knows that I write to nobody at all, not even to my relatives. It will cause great astonishment, therefore, if I suddenly send a letter either by M. de Mont¹ or by post. It will certainly be read. Does that matter? It is for those who advise such a proceeding to judge. . . . The bearer will give some details about M. de Mercy. They are too lengthy to write."

Fersen was commissioned to explain to "those who gave this advice" that one great difficulty in the way of the return of M. de Mercy to Paris was the awkwardness of his position and his relations with the new rulers "who show such scant consideration for the representatives of foreign powers." Nevertheless, she realised the necessity of resorting to the protection of the Emperor, her brother. She wished to send him a letter or some memorandum. She wrote to Fersen :

"I have only a moment. You may say that I should be pleased if they sent me a memorandum or draft of a letter for the Emperor. At the same time you must remind them how few opportunities for writing I possess, and how difficult it will be for me to influence my brother, seeing that there has never been any confidence between us. And now I see how difficult it would be just at this time to open any communication between us. Yet every day events prove to me more and more plainly the necessity of such communication; and we must try to do so as soon as possible. There are a thousand things one might say in conversation which one can never write. They would require centuries and volumes."

It was Fersen who was proposed as the ambassador to Vienna to say those things which the Queen could not write.

¹ Montmorin, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Meanwhile Fersen was endeavouring to bring the Queen into touch with such members of the revolutionary party as appeared ready to have dealings with the Court. He wrote to his father :

“Just now, one section of those fanatics, with M. de La Fayette at their head, may be won over for the King. We must not miss the opportunity if it should seem to bring any hope.”

By the intermediary of Count de Lamarck, he arranged a secret interview between Mirabeau and Marie Antoinette at St. Cloud, and aided in the understanding which resulted in Mirabeau's receiving money from Louis XVI, in return for which he furnished him with notes concerning the attitude it was advisable for the King to assume towards the Assembly, in order to strengthen the Monarchy. Fersen wrote to his father : “Mirabeau is now in the pay of, and works for, the Court.”

Mirabeau indeed declared in the Assembly that the Monarchy must continue strong, and he advocated leaving to the King the right to declare war and peace. Louis XVI was present at the Fête of the Federation, and swore to maintain the Constitution.

Fersen wrote to his sister, who dreaded what might happen on this anniversary of the taking of the Bastille.¹

“I have already reassured you, my dear friend, as to the Fête of the Federation. All went well.”

None the less, however, the situation of the King and Queen remained critical. Fersen wrote to his father :

“The situation of the King and Queen is pitiful. But they do not lose courage, the Queen especially. Her behaviour and her courage have reconciled her to every heart. But the army is lost. Regiments are mutinying

¹ 14th July 1789.

and refusing to obey their officers. They take the popular side."

In a letter to Count Taube, a friend of his family, he says :

"The Queen's courage never forsakes her, and one cannot admire her enough. The democrats are flabbergasted, yet they cannot refuse to do her justice. The King thoroughly realises his position ; but he has not the gift of expression or of saying amiable things. Perhaps, after all, that is not a misfortune at a time when it is necessary to dissimulate and to bear everything in silence."

But it is to his sister alone that he writes all he thinks of Marie Antoinette's courage :

"She is an angel of goodness. She astonishes me by her courage and her sound judgment. I wish everyone knew her as I know her and loved her as she deserves. They would do her justice."

CHAPTER III

THE FLIGHT TO VARENNES—RELATIONS WITH BARNAVE

MEANWHILE Gustavus III had made peace with Russia. He had concluded an alliance with Catherine II, who promised him her support in the counter-revolution which was being planned for France. The King of Sweden could think of nothing but how to save the King of France, his friend and ally, how to tear Louis XVI and his family from the hands of the democracy which, insulting and humiliating them, insulted royalty in their persons. He started for Aix-la-Chapelle in order to come to an understanding with the emigrant princes and the great powers, in order to plan Louis XVI's escape and to take him to the frontier, whence the emigrants, aided by the forces of the European coalition, were to escort him in triumph back to Paris.

The part played by Fersen in the Royal Family's attempt at flight is well known. He it was who submitted the project to the King and Queen, and, in a long memorandum found among his papers, discussed the means of carrying it out. He was sent to the Marquis de Bouillé at Metz to make sure of his co-operation ; and in another memorandum he related the result of his conference with the commander of the army in Alsace. After having given him the King's letter, he said : " In what I am going to say to you, it is not so much a question of a counter-revolution as of being better able to govern and provide

for the nation's happiness than the Assembly. You cannot help, even as a simple citizen, being dissatisfied with the present state of affairs; and I have come to see you in order to discuss matters which cannot be treated of in a written correspondence."

After two long interviews with the General, related in detail in this memorandum, Fersen concluded:

"From all these minutiae into which M. de B. entered with me and which concern his own position, there result the following facts: that he is on good terms with the administrative councils and functionaries of his department; that he is on fairly good terms with the town of Metz; that he is sure of his troops, having been careful not to be too exacting at a time when the power of a commander requires that he should not command. He then protested strongly his attachment for the King and his desire to serve him. He assured me that he might always be relied upon, but that with the troops he has at present, if he be opposed by the War Minister, he could do very little; that if the King got out of Paris he would give information as to regiments which might be depended on to serve as escorts. I left him favourably inclined towards our project. He seemed to me to have a very clear idea of the present situation and of the way to improve it. Yet I cannot describe how discouraged he feels nor how he longs to retire from public life if matters do not mend within the next two or three months."

As soon as the flight of the King and Queen was decided upon, it was Fersen who prepared and organised everything for the journey. He corresponded with the King of Sweden and with Mercy-Argenteau about the military demonstration which was to welcome the arrival of Louis XVI and his family on the frontier, and with Bouillé as to the convocation of a Parliament at Metz, which, as soon

as the King was out of danger, was to meet and declare the National Assembly illegal and nullify all its decisions. With Bouillé and Choiseul he arranged the movements of the troops who were to meet and escort the King upon his way. Post by post he studied the itinerary to be followed, and decided on its various stages. He obtained for the King the passport of an English traveller (Mr. Crawford) ; for the Queen that of a Russian lady, the Baroness de Korff, under whose names they were to travel. A travelling coach (the famous *berline*), large enough to accommodate the whole Royal Family, was built by his order, and by him equipped for this expedition. He packed it with provisions and everything he could think of which the travellers would require on the way. Every evening on leaving the Tuileries he carried away some article of the Queen's toilet, which he hid behind the panels of the coach. At length, when the day arrived, it was he who mounted the box and drove the *berline* out of Paris as far as Bondy. There he left the Royal Family to go on its way, while he hastily went on to Mons in order to prepare their reception in that town. He had to communicate with the King of Sweden and with Mercy in order that the manifestation should coincide with the Royal fugitives' arrival. It happened that the Queen had just received a letter from her brother, the Emperor, announcing that all arrangements had been made.

Having reached Mons, Fersen dispatched a messenger bearing a letter to Baron Taube, who was with the King of Sweden at Aix-la-Chapelle, and acting as his Secretary of State. The letter ran :

“ The King, the Queen, Madame and Madame Elisabeth left Paris in safety at midnight. I accompanied them to Bondy. I am now starting to go back and meet them.”

The rest is known. On the road to Montmédy

Fersen received the fatal news of the fugitives' arrest at Varennes.

"Everything has failed," he wrote to the King of Sweden at midnight on the 23rd of June. "The King was arrested sixteen leagues from the frontier and taken back to Paris. I am going to see M. de Mercy at Brussels and to give him a letter from the King asking the Emperor to intervene on his behalf. From Brussels I will come to Aix-la-Chapelle to see Your Majesty."

From Brussels he wrote to his sister on the 5th of July:

"I have decided to devote myself to them and to serve them as long as there is any hope. It is the decision alone which supports me and helps me to bear my grief patiently. I shall stay here probably a week or so longer, then I shall go to Aix-la-Chapelle and thence to Vienna. But don't tell anyone, for I am not mentioning it to my father. Farewell."

As he had expected, Gustavus III, whom he saw at Aix, sent him to Vienna in order to obtain the Emperor's consent to the summoning of a congress at Frankfort, with the object of concerting some combined action of the European monarchies on behalf of the French sovereigns.

From Aix, Fersen wrote to Marie Antoinette on the 30th of June 1791 :

"The King of Sweden is very much your friend. Here is a note from him. I start to-morrow to try and form a coalition of the Powers."

The same day Fersen received a letter from Marie Antoinette, written during the return journey from Varennes :

"Do not be anxious about us ; we are alive. The leaders of the Assembly do not seem inclined for violent measures. Talk to my relatives of the possibility of

succour being given us from abroad. If they are afraid of its result, you must reassure them.”¹

The next day brought another letter from Marie Antoinette : this one written after her return to Paris.

“ *Paris, 29 June.*

“ I exist ! . . . How anxious I have been about you and how I pity you for all you must have suffered at hearing no news of us. How could Heaven permit such things to happen to you ! Don’t write to me ; it would only expose us to new danger ; and especially don’t come here under any pretext whatever. Everyone knows that you got us away. Everything would be lost if you came here. We are watched day and night. I do not mind. . . . Don’t be anxious. No harm will come to me. The Assembly is prepared to treat us leniently. Farewell. . . . I can’t write any more. . . . ”²

It was Barnave’s attitude which caused the Queen to hope that the Assembly would be lenient. After their arrest at Varennes, the Royal Family had returned to Paris in company with three members of the Assembly—Barnave, Pétion and Latour-Maubourg—who by turns travelled in the Royal carriage in order to keep their eyes on the prisoners. The Queen had talked with them, with Barnave especially. The latter had at first been very reserved, turning away and looking out of the window in order to avoid replying to the Queen’s questions, so much so that Marie Antoinette said laughingly to Pétion : “ Pray tell your friend not to look out of the window so persistently when I ask him a question.”³

¹ Klinckowström, *Le Comte de Fersen et la Cour de France*, vol. i. p. 142.

² *Ibid.* The words of the original, which are replaced by asterisks, were erased by Fersen.

³ *Journal de Pétion*, quoted by Le Nôtre, *Drame de Varennes*, p. 246.

But at length the Queen's amiability and charming goodness conquered Barnave, and their conversation became intimate, almost familiar. Hence there arose on the one side a deep admiration which concealed, perhaps, a more tender feeling, and on the other, sincere friendliness. The gaoler promised his prisoner his support and his complete devotion. The Queen assured the young deputy of her confidence in him, and promised to turn to him in her hour of need.

The impression which this journey made upon Barnave is revealed by what he wrote later concerning this episode :

"It is a time for ever engraved upon my memory. It has provided calumny with many an excuse, but by fixing in my thoughts that memorable example of suffering, it has doubtless helped me to bear my own."¹

As for Marie Antoinette, she herself will give us later the impression she received from these conversations with the young orator of the Constituent Assembly.

These talks frequently took place in the evening, when, after dinner in the various houses in which the travellers stayed for the night, the Queen and Barnave walked up and down together.

Having returned to Paris on the 25th of June, Marie Antoinette found the city in a state of consternation, the Tuileries deserted, the Assembly wild with fury. Public opinion accused the King and Queen of endeavouring to rouse the Powers against France. The King was treated as a prisoner. The Jacobins clamoured for his deposition and trial.

The Queen, closely watched, was forsaken by all her friends. Fersen, the faithful "chevalier without fear and without reproach," was no longer there. He was at Vienna pleading her cause with her brother, the Emperor.

¹ *Biographie Universelle*, art. "Barnave."

Moreover, he, with all those who had aided the King's flight, had been publicly accused, and she trembled at the thought that if he returned to France, he would be arrested and thrown into prison. Of the members of the Assembly from whom, through Fersen's mediation and by his advice, the Court had formerly sought support, Mirabeau was dead, La Fayette was accused of complicity or of negligence in the matter of the flight to Varennes and was regarded with suspicion by the Clubs. No leading personage of the hour, neither of the Monarchical nor Moderate Republican party, dared to approach it.

The Queen in her isolation resolved to have recourse to the kindness of her travelling companion. The influence which, despite his youth, Barnave exercised over the Assembly, the ascendancy which he owed to his eloquence and to his enthusiasm for the Republic, rendered him of all men the most likely to turn opinion and to give back to the King the power granted him by the Constitution. Marie Antoinette had understood what Barnave had told her, namely, that this Constitution embodied the wishes of the nation; that the King must cease to dream of re-establishing his former power, that he must resign himself to the inevitable.

The motives of Marie Antoinette's resolution and the reasons for the confidence she placed in Barnave, the Queen has herself explained. At the beginning of the correspondence which follows, and which in Marie Antoinette's handwriting is inscribed with the words, "Exact copy of everything I wrote to 2 : 1 by the intermediary 1 : 0 and his replies," is this note also written by her :

"Having, since my return, reflected long on the influence, the means, and the mind of him with whom I had constantly conversed, I felt that I could only reap advantage from engaging in a kind of correspondence with him.

Nevertheless, I decided to impose as my first condition my liberty to say frankly all I thought, to praise what I approved, and to blame what I disapproved. This condition having been laid down, our correspondence now begins. I shall number each sheet. Mine are always brought back to me, and to the 'agent' I employ I dictate my replies. Thus I avoid the danger of recognition of handwriting in case of a discovery of the papers."

The intermediary or "agent" was soon found. She described him merely by the figures 1 : 0, concealing his name and rank. It was to him that she addressed her first communication with Barnave, in the letter marked No. 1, and undated, although it appears to have been written early in July 1791.

"For the sake of your devotion to me and to the public good, I ask you to endeavour on my behalf to see 2 : 1 ;¹ and I want you to tell him that, struck, during the two days we passed together, by his character and his candour, I desire to know from him what it would be best for us to do in the present situation. You will explain to him how difficult it is for me to communicate with anyone at all, and the risks that you yourself are running in executing my commission, and that it cannot occur again. I ask him, therefore, if he be willing to give me counsel, to discover for himself the means of transmitting it to me either in writing or by word of mouth. You will insist—and I have urgent reasons for this—that he must not mention the commission, with which you are entrusted, to the Grand Committee² which is now sitting. He is too intelligent not to see how disastrous would be the consequences. I should have appealed to him to speak, if M. de La F.³ had not positively

¹ Barnave.

² The committee of the Constitutionals which is mentioned later.

³ M. de La Fayette.

asserted that he entreated me not to speak of him nor to appear concerned with him in any way. He may rely upon my discretion as much as upon my character which, for the public good, will always know how to yield to what is necessary. One cannot stay as one is at present. Something must be done. But what ? I have no idea. It is to him that I look for advice. He must have realised during our discussions that I am quite sincere. I always shall be. It is the only thing left to me, and of that I can never be deprived. I believe that he means well. So do we, and whatever may be said, so we have always done. Let me therefore so arrange that we may carry out our wishes together. Let him devise means for the mutual communication of ideas. I will reply frankly whenever I can. I will hesitate at nothing which I see to be for the public good, not even if it involve me in trouble and personal unpopularity, of which, as I told him, I have always stood in horror. There are matters over which, through our position, we have not and never again shall have any control. I will say frankly that I place entire reliance on the zeal, the strength, and the intelligence of M. 2 : 1, not for ourselves, not for our persons I mean, but for the State and the public weal, which are so closely identified with the King and his son that they really constitute one. It is therefore to the man who is most devoted to the people and to his country, and to the man whom I believe to be the most influential, that I appeal to serve the one and the other, for once again they cannot be parted."

To this letter Marie Antoinette added a note in her own handwriting. Here, by the way, it should be mentioned that Marie Antoinette intended later to give this correspondence to Fersen, to whom she wrote : " You will judge for yourself ; I am keeping all of it for you." Probably,

therefore, these marginal notes to the letter were intended as explanations for Fersen. Here is one of them :

“M. 1 : 0 having shown this note to M. 2 : 1, as I gave him permission, 2 : 1 read it with interest and several times. But as to replying, he declared that he could say nothing unless 1 : 2 ¹ were present and agreed, and that they had entered into an undertaking that this should be so. He went to find him, and after a very long conversation, they said that everything was considered by a secret committee of five, and that they would bring this communication before it that very evening. They gave the following names : committee of five—Duport, Barnave, Alexandre Lameth, d’André ² and Dumas. There was another and larger committee, less intimate and less confidential. To this, in addition to the five, belonged MM. de La Fayette, Maubourg, Lacoste,³ Emmery⁴ and a few others whose names I forget. Having given this explanation, they dictated their reply.”

This reply is likewise in the handwriting of the Queen, who, doubtless, destroyed the original after having made a copy. No handwriting which could be found and recognised was the first condition laid down. The letter, numbered 1, like the letter to which it is an answer, is undated and unsigned :

“The King has long been deceived. He has permitted himself to be persuaded into a series of actions, the last of which threatens to deprive him of his crown.⁵ Nevertheless, it may still be possible to retain it for him, but only if the King and Queen will determine ever to follow that course

¹ Alexandre Lameth who, with Barnave and Duport, formed a triumvirate on the Constitutional Left of the Assembly.

² D’André (Antoine-Balthazar-Joseph, Baron).

³ Lacoste (Elie).

⁴ Grosyeux (Jean-Louis-Claude-Emmery, Comte de).

⁵ Their attempt at flight.

of action which in interest and in confidence will unite them to the majority of the nation.

“Henceforth the conduct of the King and Queen should be dictated by the knowledge they acquired during their journey, namely, that the people to a man are in favour of the Constitution. This being understood, they should next concentrate their attention on the following fact : the King cannot preserve his throne with dignity, neither can he inspire confidence and respect save by bestowing great benefits on the nation. According to the new contract which will be made between the King and the nation, if after the Constitution has been drawn up it is submitted to the King for his acceptance, these benefits would be :

“1. The return of the princes and the emigrants, or at least of most of them :

“2. Some act whereby the Emperor would recognise the new Constitution and express clearly his friendship for the French nation. This last benefit, if the Queen had contributed towards it, would be greatly to her advantage.

“The Queen and the Royal Family should do everything in their power to bring about those two results, for thus they would make an honourable and lasting peace with the nation and inspire it with faith in their new promises. This should be the object which at present should engross the attention of the King and Queen. To accomplish it they should employ all their influence with the princes and with the Emperor, so that whether by their direct efforts or by others inspired by them, all the credit of success might be attributed to the King and Queen.

“The King should therefore send some confidential messenger entrusted with letters from the King, the Queen and Madame Elisabeth to M. le Comte d’Artois, to M. de Mercy, and to anyone else likely to further the success of this project. Such negotiations are far from being im-

possible ; and they will be strongly supported. They are to the interest of all, and this is the basis of every contract.

“ It is to the interest of all the Powers to save monarchy from the shock of a European monarch deprived of his crown, and to arrest the progress of those revolutionary movements which are beginning to appear within their own borders.

“ It is to the interest of the princes and emigrants to seize an opportunity of returning honourably for the King’s good, to assure peace to France, while saving their own property, the confiscation of which will certainly be the first result of their continuing their wild and fantastic projects.

“ Further, the King and Queen should avoid every action inconsistent with this project. They should display patience and calm. While preserving their dignity, they should endeavour to inspire confidence in those who surround them. It would be desirable that a few sentences fallen from their lips should filter down to the public, which might indicate how deeply they had been impressed during their journey by the views of the people.

“ If these plans succeed, if the Constitution, having been completed, is submitted to the King and freely accepted, if, in order to prove the sincerity of his promises and to regain the confidence and affection of his people, the King succeeds in bringing back into France at least the Comte d’Artois, with the most reasonable and the most important of the emigrants, and if he succeeds in obtaining a recognition of the Constitution from the Emperor, and if possible from certain members of the House of Bourbon, the King will soon realise how he has been deceived. Then the laws will once more be enforced. Then the King’s authority will again assert itself in the effective execution of the new Constitution ; and the disorders which have hitherto afflicted the King and Queen will disappear

through the union of the powers of the Constitution and the execution of the laws upheld with severity and exactness. The influence which the Queen will have exercised to bring about this happy result, especially her intervention with the Emperor, will win for her the basis of that consideration which is her due, and of her part in the new order of things. For her to adopt other ideas, or to follow any other course of action, would mean ruin. She must banish from her mind every thought of leaving France. If it were possible for her to be suspected of making such a project or of harbouring such a thought, they would be regarded as perfidy and she would thereby forfeit for ever the confidence of the nation."

Thus the triumvirate imposed a whole programme upon the Queen and accompanied it with threats in case of rejection.

But to procure the Imperial recognition of the new régime and the return to France of the princes and emigrants was impracticable. Consequently it was long before the Queen replied to this letter. There was therefore a pause in the correspondence begun with the members of the Assembly. At the foot of the first letter she had received from them the Queen wrote this note :

"After receiving this reply, I let several days pass before writing. They grew anxious. They sent for my intermediary. 2 : 1 asked if I had no news to give them. The two friends¹ did not attempt to conceal that they thought me very frivolous, incapable of undertaking anything serious, incapable even of thinking logically. 2 : 1 himself sent a short note which I have burned, but which contained the assurance that affairs are looking better ; that the only thing to do is to be courageous and firm to the end ; that our enemies have no resource save insult ;

¹ Barnave and Lameth.

that, in short, the establishment of the Monarchy is certain, but not without dissension, seeing that the Republicans refuse to consider themselves beaten without having displayed their principles—but in any case without difficulty! . . .”

Thus in the very heart of the triumvirate and of the Committee of Five, before whom Barnave had brought Marie Antoinette's letter to “the agent,” her action in opening this correspondence had not been taken seriously, neither had the sincerity of her wish to co-operate with the Constitutionals been believed in. The reputation for frivolity and thoughtlessness, which Marie Antoinette had won for herself first as Dauphiness and later as the young Queen, persisted in spite of everything. The members of the Committee regarded her as “very frivolous,” “incapable of undertaking anything serious,” of “thinking logically.” Her communications with them they considered a mere manœuvre of the Court party, which made use of the Queen to deceive and compromise them. The fact that she did not reply to their letter confirmed this opinion. She had asked them for help and advice. They had told her what to do. Since she had not replied, their counsel must have displeased the King and the Court, and the Queen thought no more about it, was occupied with something else.

But Barnave, although he was secretly vexed at seeing the advances he had made produce no result, judged the Queen better. His conversations with her, as they travelled together, had opened his eyes to Marie Antoinette's true character. He had observed her courage, her insight and her candour; he had come to believe in her sincere desire “to do everything, to accept everything,” as she said, which should be for the good of the State and the nation, which in her eyes were so closely identified with the person

of the King and of his son that they were really one and indivisible. Therefore Barnave grew anxious when the Queen took no notice of the counsels which had been given her. He questioned her "agent." Had he no news for him from the Queen? He even gave him a note for the Queen written in Barnave's own hand, which he asked her to burn as soon as read. And in this note he assured her that affairs were looking better, that insults were the only resort of the Republicans, who found they could no longer oppose the confirmation of the Monarchy. He admonished her to be courageous and persevering.

Meanwhile Marie Antoinette still hesitated. Was she doing right to pledge herself irrevocably to those who, as the first condition of their support, imposed requirements which it was impossible to satisfy! They also promised her a memorandum on the general situation which should show the certainty of the confirmation of the Monarchy, and that the King's resumption of the Royal power was about to re-establish order and peace in the kingdom. Such a memorandum published throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom would set minds at rest, and would induce the emigrants to return: those at least who had fled on account of disorders in the provinces and the plundering of châteaux. But this memorandum they had never sent her, nor had they mentioned it again. Are they sincere in this design of restoring the King to power?

Nevertheless, she feels that the situation is growing worse from day to day. More than ever it is urgent that "something should be done," "that things should not be left as they are——" She closes the explanatory note at the end of their letter with these words:

"In spite of all that had been said to me, I did not wish either to show too much eagerness or to bind myself

by too formal an undertaking. I waited a few days before writing the following note :

“ No. 2, this 9th day of July 1791.

“ Every day circumstances grow more and more perplexing. I think it mighty important to hasten as much as possible the drawing up of the memorandum which has been mentioned. I know that some, concealing perhaps self-interest beneath the veil of caution, wish to delay this memorandum ; but the longer they delay the more passionate people become, and harm is being done by the spread of false ideas by some with malicious interest, by others who mean well and do evil unconsciously. Such a critical situation tends to become worse, and if affairs do not take a turn, there will be no restraining the emigration. The decree against the emigrants passed to-day,¹ although less severe than was feared, will fail to accomplish its object. It seems to be impossible for people, who have voluntarily left their country twenty months ago, to consent to negotiate just when they are being robbed of a great part of their fortune. And all noble souls will, I believe, agree with me. I hope with all my heart that I am mistaken. As for Monsieur,² I will write to him anything which is thought likely to restore order and tranquillity here. The person, whom it is proposed to send, has to-day been named to me. With regard to his zeal and his good intention, I think the choice good ; but as to the influence he may exert over there, the nature of his mission renders it impossible for me to form any opinion.

“ As to the Emperor, this is my position with regard to him : twenty-six years ago, we were separated ; since then, there has never been anything but a merely formal corre-

¹ This decree fixed a time during which they must return to France or their property would be confiscated.

² The King's brother, le Comte de Provence, afterwards Louis XVIII.

spondence between us. During the last fifteen months he has been more friendly, but circumstances have prevented our keeping up any regular correspondence ; consequently, as far as public affairs are concerned, my influence over him is nil. I think that while his personal interest might lead him in one direction, his consideration for his name and for his family might lead him in another. After this you will understand that my influence over my brother counts for very little. Nevertheless, I will not refuse to write to him if it were thought that by doing so I could render any service. I return to what I have already said about the memorandum. I think it is very important that it should not be delayed ; and if I say so it is not because of the impatience which we feel, and naturally, seeing our position, but because I believe that the public good requires it.”

A note is added at the end of this letter :

“ Having received the ‘ agent’s ’ permission to keep papers in his handwriting, henceforth I shall not copy his letters ; I shall merely annotate when occasion requires. I have desired the gentlemen of the committee (*ces messieurs*) to find some intermediary with whom I can talk. They tell me it is impossible on account of the strictness with which we are watched.”

In fact, all the following letters—replies to the Queen’s—are written in the same clear and individual hand. If it were the “ agent’s ” to whom they were dictated, as it is said, or if it were the hand of one of *ces messieurs* who thus bravely consented to risk his letters being discovered and his writing recognised, no one can affirm. But we may notice that in several letters, all written by the same hand, Barnave speaks in his own name. In any case, there was no “ intermediary with whom the Queen could talk ” and who was in a position to transmit verbal com-

munications. Everything therefore continued in writing until the time of those interviews which we shall mention later.

Ces messieurs' reply to this, the Queen's second letter, as well as the letter itself, is numbered 2, and the date, the 10th of July, is added by the Queen's own hand.

"The memorandum, however urgent, cannot be drawn up before Thursday. Public opinion is asserting itself violently in the opposite direction. The people were growing calmer, but the extravagance of 2 : 9¹ has roused them again. Such circumstances will have no effect on men of stable character. The public interest, which in this crisis is identical with the King's, will be their only concern, and their success is certain. If the King and the Queen will display on their part as much confidence as these men on theirs show constancy and courage, they will answer for everything until the time arrives for the King to assume freely a definite rôle. But it is only on condition that in this crisis, as in all those which will have preceded it, their advice shall be followed in every particular. It is necessary for its success that from the beginning to the end of this important affair a regular plan of conduct should be followed. If on each side it is entirely followed, then it will restore to the kingdom tranquillity, and to the King his dignity and his prestige. But if it were possible for the influence of a few counsellors to persuade the King to deviate from it but for a moment, the State would be thrown into confusion, the King would lose his crown, and those who had wished to save one and the other would be driven to save themselves and the State by joining the opposite party."

"This having been agreed, the only matters with

¹ The Comte de Provence, who had assumed the title of Regent because of the captivity of the King and the Dauphin.

which the Queen need occupy herself are those which have been represented to her with regard to the Emperor and the emigrants. What is the interest of kings, and especially of the Emperor, in this matter is there clearly pointed out; any armed expedition against France, ineffectual as it might be, would expose them to find our revolution spreading to their dominions, and the means of that spreading are much easier, more certain, than they think. Their interest, therefore, requires that they should employ all pacific means in their power to restore the King to his throne and thus to put an end to this revolution which might become contagious.

“If it is important for the King that peace with the Powers and their recognition of the Constitution should be attributed to his influence, it is likewise equally important that the Queen should be known to have influenced her brother.

“Should the Powers see that their interest lies in acting as we have suggested, then the princes and the emigrants will be left unsupported, and henceforth their only hope of honour and of salvation would be to throw themselves into the arms of the King. While endeavouring therefore to persuade the King’s brothers, it will be necessary to deprive them of any hope of support from the Emperor. Consequently this Prince must be made to feel that the only cause which ought to interest him is the King’s and the Queen’s, and that he will bring about a most happy revolution in their favour if, at their entreaty, he will recognise and guarantee the new French Constitution after the King himself has accepted it.”



CHAPTER IV

THE QUEEN'S INTERVENTION WITH THE EMPEROR AND THE EMIGRANT PRINCES

THE Queen's correspondents soon gave her proof of their sincere desire to maintain royalty. On the 15th of July, Barnave, in an eloquent speech, loudly applauded by La Fayette, proposed and carried in the Assembly the King's restoration to power after his acceptance and sanction of the Constitution as revised by the Assembly.

Now the Queen was pleased with her counsellors. She wished to see them and talk with them. In conversation it would be so much easier to come to some agreement.

“ No. 3, this 20th July (1791). ”

“ I waited until the great events of last week were over. I noted with pleasure the strength and the courage with which the Monarchy was supported by the persons whom I address. Their attitude makes me trust them concerning other matters. But it would be well for them to communicate with me as often as possible, or, in other words, that they should confide their projects to me. Being kept in isolation, not permitted to see anyone or to receive news from anyone, able to write but seldom, all I know of events is through the news sheets. With so few resources it is impossible for me to form any correct opinion and still less to argue about it. The only matter on which I can write with any authority is the mission it is proposed to

send to the King's brothers. I believe, for example, that if anyone is to be sent, it should be without delay. This project is already known to the people ; and busybodies, working in their own interest, as well as persons who hope through the princes' refusal to bring in another order of affairs, will be exercising their influence and will be endeavouring to upset the negotiations which it is proposed to undertake in our name. For this reason I was sorry to see that M. Muguet in his report mentioned the desired return of the princes and the emigrants. It was unnecessary and it will only make them all the more obstinate when approached on our behalf. They will know fifteen days in advance that it is the wish of the amalgamated committees. M. Barnave, in his speech, with his usual intelligence, expressed the same wish, but in a much more tactful manner, since he made the peace of the kingdom and the end of disorder depend upon its fulfilment. That reason alone should suffice to induce the emigrants to return. Still, their fears must be set at rest as to their personal safety and that of their family. This applies to the rank and file of emigrants only, for the King's brothers would never consider their personal interest. On that point I can answer for them. Terms must be offered them, and such terms as they can accept. I don't enter into details, for I don't know what terms it is proposed to offer, but if the negotiation is to succeed, the terms must be honourable.

"Before concluding, I repeat that I desire to be informed of matters on which I ought to reflect, matters connected with the present situation, or those, still more important, connected with the future. I will consider them in my retreat, and I will ever reply with that care and precision which shall be dictated not by my knowledge of public affairs but by my ardent desire for the public good, which is so intimately associated with our own."

In their reply to this letter, dated 21st July and numbered 3 in the Queen's handwriting, her advisers again assured Marie Antoinette that the Monarchy is about to be confirmed and the power of the Government strengthened. At the same time they insisted that she must endeavour to influence the Emperor, likewise her sister, the Queen of Naples, and the Court of Madrid. They also demanded that through his aunts at Rome the King should endeavour to preserve the papal recognition of the civil constitution of the clergy. Thus they persisted in demanding from the Queen services which were far beyond her power to render.

"No. 3, this 21st of July 1791.

"With character and courage it should be possible to accord recognition to those who possess the same qualities, and to put full confidence in them ; and to conceive that they will not check at simpler matters after the performance of the most difficult. Whatever may be to the public interest is within their purview, and assuredly the King's interests are included therein ; what they propose, that they are resolute to perform and certain of achieving.

"When Monarchy has been made safe, order, peace and respect for the law must be assured : the Revolution must be ended. This has always been their aim, and now is the time. Disorder shall be repressed, government resume its function, the law be enforced with severity. All this is within their duty and their power.

"As to the King, we may say again what cannot be said too often : his sovereignty and his power shall be his once more, and the advantages that will accrue to him under the Constitution, when it is really in force, will be out of all proportion to his present expectations. But what the law cannot give him, what he must procure for himself, is consideration and confidence ; and these are

to be had but along the lines indicated. To work upon the emigrants will not suffice without working upon the Powers to induce them to recognise the Constitution. If he can bring them over to this determination the King will not only derive therefrom the advantage of regaining national confidence in himself, but he will find it the best means of forcing the emigrant princes and others to fall into line. If they are left without support, if at least such of the Powers as may be allied to France refuse their help, they will be reduced to abandoning wild notions which, while they postpone their repatriation, keep trouble brewing here; and when they rejoin the King's circle they will increase that prestige which it is so necessary he should regain.

“For the Queen's sake it is important that any successful interventions with the Emperor should be placed to her credit. And she should not delay in deciding to undertake it. She might employ the bearer of this note. He might be given a memorandum; and it could easily be arranged that the public should place to the Queen's account all the credit which is her due. The Queen must decide whether anything can be done at the Neapolitan Court. It is thought that her influence over her sister might be useful. The Court of Madrid is favourably disposed. The King should not lose a moment or neglect any means to bring it to a decision. Could not the King through his aunts bring pressure to bear on the Pope, so that by recognising the civil constitution of the clergy he may contribute to the speedy establishment of the tranquillity of the realm?

“These matters have already been repeated many times. But they are important, they are true and at the present time they deserve the closest attention. When the time comes, other measures will be indicated which should serve to reconquer national opinion and to repair mistakes which have been made. Hitherto the course of

events and the position of affairs have been little understood. But the future will be bright and happy if all counsels dictated by ignorance, prejudice, and perfidy be courageously rejected, and if only those are believed who understand the Revolution, who alone can control it, whose counsels are sure because they are disinterested, and who may be trusted because they are too proud and too sincere to give anyone cause to repent having confided in them."

At length Marie Antoinette made up her mind. She wrote to Monsieur, sending him a cipher in which he might reply to her. She wrote to the Emperor, giving him to understand at whose suggestion she wrote. The drafts of these letters are not in the packet, but there is the outline of one to the Emperor, submitted to the Queen by her correspondents, which she apparently used more or less when writing to her brother. It is difficult to say how far Marie Antoinette made use of this model and how far she employed its terms. But if one may judge from the corrections made by her own hand, from the words erased and replaced by others, the phrases altered or deleted, then I am inclined to think that she used it in its entirety in writing to Leopold II.

"The Queen should begin," runs the model, "by explaining the motives which inspired her departure. In a few words she will describe her situation at that time and her fears for the future. Then she will pass on to her present situation and ideas. Something like this she might express, using her own words and style."

Here Marie Antoinette writes on the margin the paragraph with which she intends to begin her letter. In these words she apparently thinks she has sufficiently followed the recommendation of her counsellors :

"I am desired, my dear Brother, to write to you, and

I am told that my letter will be delivered. For myself, I possess no means whatever of sending you even news of my health. I shall not enter into details concerning the events which preceded our departure. You are aware of the motives which then prompted us."

Afterwards, following the model, she continued :

"By the vicissitudes of our journey and the events which followed our return to Paris, I was greatly impressed. On recovering from my consternation, I began to reflect on what I had seen and to try to ascertain what in the present situation could be the real interest of the King, and what line of conduct I ought to adopt. I was brought to a conclusion by various influences which I will explain.

"In circumstances which involved my destiny and my life, never have I ceased to rely on your affection for me. But how pleased I was when, after having reflected at length on our mutual relations, it was borne in upon me that in the line of action which everything seemed to prescribe for us, the King's interests were intimately associated with those of my Brother.

"The situation has greatly changed since the events caused by our departure. Then the National Assembly was divided into numerous parties. Far from any order being established, every day the power of the law seemed to weaken.

"The King, deprived of all authority, regarded it as impossible that when the Constitution was framed he could resume his authority through the influence of the National Assembly, seeing that every day the Assembly was losing the people's respect. In short, there appeared no end to all this disorder.

"To-day matters look much more hopeful. The most influential leaders have met and openly declared themselves in favour of the preservation of Monarchy and of the King

and of the re-establishment of order. Since their reconciliation sedition has been suppressed by great superiority of force. Throughout the kingdom the National Assembly has acquired a prestige and an authority which apparently it is ready to employ in order to establish the execution of the law and to fix a limit to the Revolution. The most moderate among those who have ceaselessly opposed the Revolution now unite, because in their union alone do they perceive the means of enjoying in security what the Revolution has left them, and of putting an end to the disorders of which they fear the continuation. In short, everything seems to point to the end of those troubles which have agitated France for the last two years.

“This natural and possible conclusion will not give quite all the strength to authority which I believe necessary, but it will preserve us from greater misfortunes. It will create a more peaceful situation. But, when the nation has recovered from the intoxication which now excites it, perhaps the advisability of giving wider scope to the Royal power will be realised.

“Such is the progress of events, such is their future probability. I contrast this probable future with what might happen if one opposed the nation's will. It would then be impossible to attain anything save by the employment of some superior force. If this were employed, I will not speak of the personal danger which would threaten the King, my son and me. But how uncertain the issue of such a course! And whatever its results, it would necessarily involve disaster which is too terrible to think of.

“All here are determined to defend themselves against the foreigner. The army itself is without leaders and weakened by insubordination. But the kingdom is full of armed men, and their frenzy is such that no one can tell what they would do or how many victims would be sacri-

ficed before the centre of France could be reached. Neither can one tell, when one sees what is happening here, what would be the results of their despair. While the success of such an attempt would be extremely doubtful, the disaster it would bring to everyone is certain.

“As for the part you, my dear Brother, would play in this enterprise, while sacrificing yourself to our interests, you would nevertheless be increasing our danger, for we should be thought to have influenced you.

“But, by following the line of action which circumstances themselves would seem to indicate, you might at the same time serve your own interests and ours with greater effect.

“If the Revolution should end as I have predicted, it would be important for the King to win that solid confidence and consideration which alone can give real force to the authority of the Crown. Nothing could contribute more to obtain for him that confidence, that consideration, than our influence over your decision—a decision which would assure peace to France and put an end to that anxiety which is disastrous for everyone, because it is one of the chief obstacles in the way of the establishment of public tranquillity. The part we should thus have taken in bringing to an end public disorder would win us the support of the Moderates; while the others, and chiefly the leaders of the Revolution, would also be won by our display of a sincere wish to accomplish an object which all desire.

“Such a course seems to me to my Brother’s interest. Before dissolving itself, the National Assembly would naturally, in concert with the King, decide with what Powers France should remain in alliance. And naturally the Assembly would be likely to form the closest alliance with whatever European Power had, after the King of France, recognised the Constitution. To these general considerations I may add that I myself have power to

further such an alliance, but that my power would be increased if you were to take my view of the present situation.

"I have no doubt but that the leaders of the Revolution who have lately supported the King will assure for him that consideration and respect which are necessary for the exercise of his authority. I believe also that he will find in the close union between France and a Power to which the King, through me, is related by blood, a means of reconciling his dignity with the interests of the nation. Thus he will establish and strengthen a Constitution of which, as they all agree, royalty is the essential basis.

"I rather think that, apart from all other considerations, the King may find that from such a settlement, and from the mind of the people after it has been pacified, he will derive more deference and loyalty than he has reason to expect from those who have left the kingdom.

"I believe, therefore, and serious meditation on the state of affairs has absolutely convinced me, that our interests as well as yours and the peace, not of France alone but of the whole of Europe, should make us long for the speediest and most peaceful end to the revolution which is convulsing this country. I believe also that you, my dear Brother, possess the power to contribute to such an end, if you will support the King in the part he is about to play, and that you as well as we will derive benefit from a tightening of the bonds which unite you to France.

"Farewell, my dear Brother. I embrace you and love you with all my heart."

The packet contains Leopold II's reply to Marie Antoinette's letter. It is remarkable for its involved language and sophistical reasoning. It will be noticed that the passages from his sister's letter which the Emperor quotes and underlines are to be found precisely in the

outline submitted to the Queen by her counsellors—proof that she had borrowed them. It must also be remembered that M. de Montmorin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, had, at the same time that the Queen was writing to the Emperor, addressed a dispatch to the French Ambassador at Vienna, pleading the same cause and using the same arguments. It is to this communication, ostensibly from the French Government, that Leopold II alludes in replying to his sister. The tone of this reply shows how little the Emperor had understood or wished to understand either the Queen's desire for peace, or her patriotic zeal, or her political foresight. He preferred to doubt her sincerity, or rather the independence of her judgment. She is the Republicans' prisoner, she is acting under constraint, he argued. There is no reason why he should attach importance to the advances made by those who are using her as their more or less willing, but in any case, impressionable tool. France, reduced to impotence by the factions which rend her, would in her present state be neither a stable ally nor a formidable enemy. Austria's policy is to temporise, to gain time and to let things drift. The riots of the populace, the plundering of the nobles, the persecution of the clergy, the disorders of every kind now occurring in France must bring about civil war, and with it the weakening and final dissolution of the State. Then will be the time to interfere profitably. Meanwhile his sister's reassurances as to reaction and pacification came in the nick of time and justified his inaction and his delay in granting the request of the emigrant princes that he would go to the help of the King and Queen of France. True, there was Prussia to be considered. Its king, smitten with illuminism and humanitarian dreams, seemed inclined to lend an ear to the entreaties of Louis XVI's brothers, who represented to him that the King and Queen were the prisoners of the populace which was insulting royalty in their persons. In

the task of avenging those insults, of defending Royal dignity and re-establishing Monarchy in France, Austria must not allow Prussia to be before her. But, while mistrusting the mystic hallucinations of his Prussian colleague, Leopold II knew that it was Prussia's policy never to do anything for nothing. He knew she would never engage in any undertaking which would not assure her substantial advantages or hold out some promise of an increase of territory. In this respect Prussia, like Austria, had every reason for delay. They might intervene together when the time came and the fruit was ripe.

This was the policy which the Emperor caused to be adopted at the interview at Pillnitz. Hence the famous clause, "then and in that case" [*alors et dans ce cas*], inserted as a condition of the intervention of Austria and Prussia in the affairs of France. By making the interventions depend upon a previous agreement between the Powers—an agreement which he could always bring about—the Emperor reserved to himself the power of deciding if, and when, the intervention should occur. Only the princes and the emigrants affected to be ignorant of or actually denied the existence of this clause, by representing the intervention of the Powers as imminent and certain.

Meanwhile the Emperor could reply calmly to his sister that he noted her assurances with regard to the maintenance of the Monarchy in France, thanks to the agreement of all parties and to the adoption of a Constitution which the King would accept. But first it must be seen what was the nature of the Constitution, it must be proved that the King had accepted it in perfect liberty, that the Monarchy was re-established on a solid basis and that order and tranquillity were being restored. Until then there could be no question of a renewal of the alliance of Marie Thérèse.

“Vienna, the 19th August (1791)."

“I have safely received, my dear Sister, the letter you were desired to write to me. I cannot tell you how I grieve over your situation and the King’s, nor how anxious it makes me nor how eagerly I desire to comfort you. The information contained in your letter would convey a ray of hope which would rejoice me, did past and present events permit me to be confident with regard to the future.

“Your letter announces ‘an agreement of all those who are most influential with the object of preserving the King and the Monarchy and of establishing order.’¹ Much the same assurance is expressed in a letter ostensibly from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the King’s ambassador at my Court : ‘The best affected members of the National Assembly,’ so runs the letter, ‘have united, and with the King’s true servants they are devising means to maintain the Monarchy and to restore to His Majesty that power and authority which he needs in order to govern.’² If only the sincerity of the intention were accompanied by certainty of execution these assurances would answer to all my cherished hopes, and would herald those far-reaching effects of a cause which has become that of every sovereign, and the end of a state of affairs which necessarily calls forth the complaints and may perhaps excite the efforts of all the European Powers acting in concert.

“The importance of such issues demands that I should write with extreme frankness. The sovereigns of Europe, naturally indignant at the treatment of the King and his family, alarmed lest the horrors of rebellion and anarchy should spread into their own states, will never be set at rest by assurances and illusions. Facts alone will reveal to them intentions.

¹ Underlined in the original.

² Underlined in the original.

“ If the preservation of the Monarchy be really desired, the Constitution must be voluntarily accepted by the Very Christian King ; and there must not be the slightest shadow of doubt as to the perfect freedom of his will. That doubt will exist as long as his resolution is subjected to unpleasant alternatives. It can only be the Constitution's conformity with the essential conditions of monarchical government that can set our minds at rest concerning this matter.

“ These essential conditions will answer to the demands of the King's free declaration made on the 20th of June.¹ They are also comprised in the assurances given in your letter and in the Minister's.

“ But once again, my dear Sister, facts alone will determine the Powers to resolve on that united action which they cannot delay to take with regard to French affairs.

“ With zeal, with strength, and with vigour we unite our wishes and our support to favour those sincere efforts which will be made by the true friends of the King and the French nation. But nothing in the world shall distract our most serious attention from what is of concern to your happiness and the public weal of Europe.

“ I embrace you, dear Sister, with the tenderest affection and the keenest interest.”

As for the reply written by the Comte de Provence, his use of the cipher he had received from his sister-in-law had rendered his letter almost illegible.

She wrote to him :

“ At length I have succeeded in deciphering your letter, my dear Brother, but it was not without difficulty. There were so many mistakes [in the use of the cipher].

¹ The document left by Louis XVI on his departure from Paris, in which he declared that he was not free.

Still, it is not surprising, seeing that you are a beginner and that your letter was a long one. Your expressions of affection cannot but touch me deeply. I like to think that you know my heart too well to doubt it. Yes, indeed, mistrust cannot and must not exist in any of us; and you must have seen by what the messenger told you, how far our heart is from harbouring it toward either of you. But if we wish confidence to endure we must beware of those vile, base creatures who only exist for intrigue and who seek to disunite us, knowing that if we agree their part is over. There is, for example, one word in your letter which, by your affection for me, I implore you to explain. You say that there is a crowd of *agents* who say we have entrusted them with messages for you. Who are these *agents*? I should like to know their names, and then it would be easy for me to prove their falseness. We also are told absurd things and we do not believe them.

“Moreover, you know what I think. I made no attempt to conceal it from you when you were still with us. As for what you say about the gazettes and the references to ‘the Queen’s party’ and ‘the Princes’ party,’ I have long known all those lies and all the absurd things which are said on that subject. They could only affect me if I were not sure of my brothers’ affection and of the justice they must always render to my heart. My ideas must be the same as theirs, since we pursue the same object, which is the happiness of the King and of our common country. The only difference is a superficial one and arises from my being more in the midst of things and thus better able to judge the situation and the expediency, the possibility or the impossibility, of this or that project. As for the injustice of those who are outside and only see things from a distance, all their talk does not affect me. It seems to me that one has anxiety enough without troubling about such things. They are people embittered by suffering

who don't know whom to blame. They will not hinder me from going straight on my way and doing what I believe to be my duty. If I attain that object, after which alone we should all strive, namely, the common good and the happiness of all, those very persons who have been loudest in their complaints will be compelled to say that I have displayed more constancy and courage in the attaining of this object than the others. It is the expectation that in the future justice will be done me that helps me to bear all my troubles. Those who will refuse it me I despise too thoroughly to care about. Forgive me if I seem hard, but I am writing to a friend, and this title compels him to treat me with indulgence.

"There is one part of your letter which I should be wrong not to mention, for it made a great impression upon me. It is that which refers to your two letters from your brother. You are thoroughly acquainted with his heart and mind. He has not disagreed with you; but he sees his position in all its aspects, just as it is. If he has been compelled to refuse you, it is not through mistrust but through caution. His action is not without reason. How often, when we were together, did we not say, you and I, that he alone can judge whether or no a thing be possible. Those who tell you it is not so, deceive you and endeavour to make differences between us. Your brother is writing to you. I have therefore nothing to add to this letter, which is already very long."

It is not difficult to see from this letter that already Marie Antoinette was becoming indignant at the conduct of the King's brothers. It was before the interview at Pillnitz and the collective letter which the princes wrote to their brother. That letter finally opened her eyes as to the perfidy of their designs. But already their attitude at Coblenz and the insinuations contained in their letters,

had convinced her that she could place no confidence in them, and that every attempt to make them return to France would be wrongly interpreted and in vain. After Pillnitz, when the emigrant princes had in a manner dethroned Louis XVI by declaring him incapable of defending his crown; after the collective letter in which they refused to obey him and return to France, in which they entreated him not to accept the Constitution, asserting that the whole of Europe would come to his help, and concluding with these words: "There is no reason to fear a great crime, because the whole of Paris knows that great armies would immediately descend upon the impious city"—after these events Marie Antoinette, who had lived through the 5th and 6th of October at Versailles, who had witnessed the events which followed the return from Varennes, and all the manifestations of the populace in Paris, and who knew that "this great crime" was inevitable if the King's brothers carried out their intention of the invasion of France by foreign troops—after these events the Queen was driven to conclude that the princes were ready to sacrifice the King, provided only that their cause were triumphant.

She, with the King, had done everything to persuade them to abandon this enterprise and return to France. But after the secret mission of Goguelat, Louis XVI's emissary, whom the King sent in September to tell them that they must cease inciting enemies against France and come and resume their places by the throne, she was obliged to give up all hope of persuading them to abandon their plans. The Comte de Provence had received Goguelat haughtily, had invited him to join the emigrants, and, when he refused to abandon the King's cause, had dismissed him brusquely without even replying to his brother's letter.¹ Marie Antoinette then wrote to Barnave, who

¹ Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l'Emigration*, p. 122 (Coblentz).

was always urging her to intervene with the emigrant princes :

“ I repeat that our interest is so intimately bound up with Monsieur's return, that any action I might take in the matter would be liable to suspicion. Some means, quite apart from us, must be found of bringing pressure to bear upon them. Moreover, the fact that at Coblenz¹ any part we play in this matter is thought to be involuntary and is regarded as a proof of our lack of liberty, prevents our doing anything privately.”

To serve the King and Queen in spite of themselves, to save the ancient Monarchy and the ancient privileges of the aristocracy, to destroy the abhorred Constitution, was the aim of the princes and the emigrants. Perish the King rather than Royalty. The King is dead, long live the King ; these were their sentiments.

Although Gustavus III was the friend of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, he had permitted himself, during his stay at Aix, to be won by the ideas prevalent in the emigrants' camp. Despite the advice of Fersen, who never tired of pointing out to him the danger to which this action would expose the Royal Family at Paris, despite Breteuil's fears of a similar disaster, despite the remonstrances of Catherine II who grasped the situation, he decided in the interest of royalty to support the emigrants' projects at the expense of Louis XVI. He sent to his ambassador at St. Petersburg a dispatch, the contents of which were intended for Catherine :

“ I have read of your fears for the Royal Family. However well grounded your apprehensions were then, the dangers are now much greater. But, although I am deeply interested in that family's fate, I am still more interested in the general situation, in the peace of Europe,

¹ The headquarters of the emigrants.

in the individual interests of Sweden, and in the cause of the sovereigns. All these issues are involved in the restoration of Royalty in France. It may matter little whether it be Louis XVI, or Louis XVII, or Charles X who occupies the throne, provided that the throne be restored and the monster crushed.”¹

But Marie Antoinette did not see why King Louis XVI should be thus dispossessed. She had accepted the Constitution, and she intended to make of the weak Louis XVI a constitutional monarch, supported by the people. She thought thus to save what was left of the ancient and glorious Monarchy by adapting it to the new ideas.

¹ Aix, 10 Juillet 1791: *Lettre au comte Stedingk, ambassadeur de Suède à Saint-Petersbourg*. Schinckel-Boétius, Appendice I., p. 116.

CHAPTER V

THE BODY-GUARD—THE 17TH JULY ON THE CHAMP-DE-MARS

THE disbanding of the King's body-guard was another question on which the Queen's counsellors persisted in trying to gain her support. Yet she found it difficult to come to any understanding with them.

The National Assembly discussed granting the King a constitutional guard, but insisted on disbanding the body-guard which had resisted the people's will. Barnave and his friends submitted to Marie Antoinette a project for disbanding this body and replacing it by a royal guard which should be recruited by the departmental administrations and by the municipality of Paris. The Queen replied to them :

"This 18th of July.

"I return you this paper in case you should need it. It contains some things that are excellent, others of which I disapprove, and others again about which I must explain my opinion.

"By the plan proposed the body-guard is absolutely suppressed. Never will the King consent to that. His honour, his reputation and, I venture to say, his personal safety and that of his family would prevent his consenting. I quite understand that as long as he is in Paris or under the control of Paris, he cannot bring them back, but as soon as the new order is restored he will cease to consent to

be separated from them. To the employment of only as many as are necessary to follow the Royal coach and to guard the doors of our apartments I may consent. Perhaps it would be wiser. It might allay public anxiety. But you must remember that the King cannot leave Paris without his body-guard; and they must be the old guards bearing the same name and wearing the same uniform. He will wait as long as is necessary. But never will he give way so far as to consent to their disbandment. He owes it to himself; he owes it to the blood of so many brave men shed for him. Those guards thought of nothing but of saving his life and the lives of his wife and son. They did not even defend themselves, because they had received the word not to fire. The whole of this revolution being nothing but the effect of fear, one cannot but extol such an admirable and remarkable display of honour. I know that 2 : 1¹ will perhaps not be pleased by our firm resolution; but he ought to have confidence in me and to understand that I cannot yield in a matter in which honour and gratitude are involved.

“He seems to go back again to that unfortunate banquet.² If only he knew, as I do, that they were the same monsters who were to massacre them later who urged them to give that banquet, and that certain proof may be furnished of the fact. Here I might stop. The solution is this: if he has not his body-guard the King will not leave Paris.³ I will enter into further details. In any case, I consider the measure for the two infantry and cavalry regiments wise and necessary. There may even be reasons for bringing them as far as Fontainebleau. That

¹ Barnave.

² The banquet which the King's body-guard gave at Versailles to the Flemish regiment which had come to their help.

³ It was a question of the King's going to a provincial town to ratify the Constitution in order to prove that he was doing so in perfect liberty.

is a matter for future consideration. All the villages of the neighbourhood are just now in open insurrection. I would rather see at Fontainebleau the Lorraine rifles now at Rambouillet, because one may be sure of them, they have already proved their loyalty.

“You must also tell us how you intend to make the National Assembly consent to the King’s journey. All the news from the provinces that reaches us is bad. It seems as if fresh rebellions were about to break out in the army. The troops at Metz, in Alsace, and even in Hainault, are discontented and the officers seem to fear an outburst.”

In their replies to these objections the Queen’s counsellors appear ready to break off the negotiations. It seems as if the Queen must adopt the line of action they suggest or forfeit their co-operation. They are determined not to allow her to agree and then retract. They will not permit her to adopt certain items of their programme and reject the rest.

“No. 4, 25 July.”

“The time has arrived when the Queen must act. Those in whom she places her confidence are the first to entreat her, before engaging in this matter, to question herself and to make sure that in what she is about to do she will never go back or change her opinion. She is capable of understanding that it would be better to do nothing at all than to follow intermittently a certain course of action, and hence to lose the benefit she might have realised as well as the esteem of those who had advised her. The counsels they give her are good and their successful issue is certain. Far from their ever engaging her in anything derogatory to her character or the dignity of her rank, to maintain them will ever be an essential part of the action prescribed for her. But first of all she must decide to follow that line of action constantly.

"These words are not dictated by mistrust. It is because we have decided to believe in the resolution the Queen is about to take that we wish her to do nothing through constraint or surprise. We must repeat that those who now address her will always be generous as opponents and unchanging as friends, that, if after having thought over the counsels they offer, the Queen decided to reject them, she need never fear anything approaching a betrayal. To speak frankly, their first consideration is a revolution on which they have staked their honour and their existence, but nothing on earth would ever induce them to betray the confidence placed in them. If the interests they represent were incompatible with the Queen's they would leave her, they would never seek to deceive her. Thus, in any case, she may rely upon their unswerving straightforwardness. But courage in the face of misfortune has other claims. It would be too great austerity, it would be robing one's virtue in a garment not becoming to it, to deny that a sweet, pure joy resides in serving and consoling the Queen.

"These are matters on which the Queen should reflect.

"The Queen has misunderstood the Revolution. She nearly met her loss in an event which might have been of benefit to her. But it is useless to harp on the past. We must consider present conditions and see what advantage may be derived from them in the future.

"The Queen would be wrong to think that her personal influence is lost for ever in France. Unprejudiced and fearless judges of public opinion will tell her that she is the object of bitter resentment, but that when she has kept the reputation for character and courage there are always ways of regaining popular affection. The Queen has made herself strongly disliked ; but she has suffered, and Frenchmen are always ready to be interested in those on whom they think they have revenged themselves. But the Queen

has one advantage : she has done little to mislead the public as to her true opinions. She has always been regarded as the enemy. She has, so to speak, waged war in the open ; and on that account the people will return to her with all the more confidence, if by decided action, by doing useful things which allow of no double interpretation, she clearly shows that she has made up her mind, that after having striven long against the new order, she has at length come to understand it, to regard it as inevitable, to seek to win for herself in it a place and consideration.

“ In times of storm and stress everything serves to excite hatred and mistrust ; in times of calm everything serves to restore milder sentiments. The French people will soon grow tired of hating, and they will endeavour, they will desire eagerly to cultivate sentiments more natural to them ; and those who give them an occasion to display such sentiments will confer a great benefit. Who is so well fitted as the Queen to appeal to such dispositions ? Has she not already known brilliant popularity ? Public opinion of her may have changed, but at any rate it has never attained indifference ; and if the heart’s fire be not dead it is always possible to rekindle it. For the moment it is enough to face the position boldly and firmly. We will do so.

“ By its recent decrees the National Assembly has again ratified the Constitution. Never has the public mind been keener, more determined than it is at present. The Assembly has guarded the frontiers with the best bodies of reserve troops, whose recruiting it has just decreed ; and long before any really formidable attack can be attempted, we shall be in a condition to repulse it.

“ But in the midst of our war preparations we none the less desire peace, precisely because we know that tranquillity at home can only be satisfactorily established by

the cessation of those anxieties which originate abroad ; secondly, because we cannot fail to see that the expenditure entailed by our national defence will in time become extremely heavy.

“ All this petty anxiety, which causes these vast preparations for war, will cease as soon as one of the great European Powers, by recognising our Constitution, deprives our emigrants of hope and dissipates our fears as to our foreign relations.

“ This Power, whichever it be, will come forward and an alliance will be made between us, we cannot doubt, for at present we have common interests. That Power will be Prussia or the Emperor. Both, as the Queen knows, have reasons to wish for our alliance. Both, when the affairs of France since the 21st of June are made known to them, will realise that our revolution is finished, that public order is about to be restored, that we are about to resume our place in the European system, and that the time has arrived to think of acquiring or of retaining our alliance.

“ The Emperor is at present our ally, and the Queen cannot be ignorant that urgent political reasons make many advocate a Prussian alliance. We will not discuss this question. We believe that for the present the Austrian alliance would be better, because it provides an effectual means of restoring to the King the confidence and consideration which are his due. But if this is the course to be followed it must be decided on without delay, in order that the present situation may be profited from and credit and gratitude accrue. [Presumably to the King and Queen.] To the Queen belongs the most important part in these negotiations. An intermediary between France and her brother, she may be useful to both, and thus regain her credit and her tranquillity. She must bring into play her brother's affection for herself as well as the superior and dominant political interest. She should also take

advantage of M. de Mercy's devoted attachment to her. She should indeed make use both of one and the other.

"Thus, she should lose no time in writing to the Emperor to dissuade him from any idea, however improbable it may appear, of joining in projects against France, to persuade him to be ready to recognise the Constitution immediately after it has been accepted by the King, in order that the Assembly, before its dissolution, may ratify the treaty of alliance. The Queen should also urge M. de Mercy's return in order that she may confer with him as to the conduct of these important negotiations. With these matters she should occupy herself instantly.

"A clever and reliable person will be chosen to carry the Queen's communication to her brother, and suggestions will be given her as to the kind of letter she should write. If she consents, everything shall be ready and the person will have started before the end of the week. As for M. de Mercy, the only question is to persuade him to come, and for that it will suffice for the Queen to write that she desires his presence here, that recent events have cast a very strong light on matters, and that it is necessary he should come.

"The Queen should express to the persons who will be sent to the emigrants a keen and sincere desire for the success of their mission. She will consider whether a letter from her to the Queen of Naples might not be useful in gaining that Court for the cause of France. She will consider whether there is no other influence she can exercise, and she will let us know.

"The Queen cannot answer for the success of her endeavours. But she is expected not to act feebly, but ardently and sincerely to do everything so that success may attend her efforts. Whatever course is followed, we are bound to be successful in the end, but to that success the Queen must have contributed as much as possible. Those

who give her this advice do so in her own interest, but also for the pleasure it gives them to owe her gratitude and to be able to place in her a confidence which shall never be shaken."

As we have seen, the Queen wrote to the Emperor, using the suggestions contained in the outline which was sent to her. The reply, received a month later, was not such as her counsellors had expected. There was no alliance to be submitted to the Constituent Assembly before it separated. She also wrote to Monsieur, the King's brother; and we know the result. It remained for her to write to M. de Mercy to persuade him to return to Paris. She felt that this letter would be even more ineffectual than the others. Personally the Austrian Ambassador was devoted to her. He had always been her faithful friend and adviser. He would certainly do anything he could to please her. But would the Emperor ever consent to his representative coming to resume his post at the French Court? In his eyes Louis XVI was a prisoner in his own capital. The government was in the hands of revolutionaries. The streets were in the hands of the mob. Authority was non-existent. His ambassador would not even be permitted to see the King. His ambassadorial rank would not save him from insult. All these difficulties Marie Antoinette foresaw. Her counsellors did not. She wrote to them:

"No. 5, the 29th of July (1791).

"This morning I saw M. de Mont.¹ He suggested that I should write to M. de Mercy as agreed. I made a few objections, but only in order to abandon them afterwards, so that I might appear to have been convinced by him. I will write this letter; and I am sure that M. de M . . . will do everything in his power for me. I think also that his presence here would be a great advantage.

¹ Montmorin, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

But, to be perfectly frank, would the Emperor ever permit one who held the position of ambassador to his brother-in-law to return here under present conditions ? Would he ever permit this man to return and play that insignificant part which is all now permitted to the diplomatic body ? Whoever comes to see the King is refused admittance. No member of that body now dares to present himself for fear of being insulted. Suppose even that M. de M. wishes to come through devotion to me, can it be imagined that my brother, who must act cautiously and with his eyes wide open, would permit him to run this danger ? Can it be thought that the Emperor does not feel keenly the insults that are being heaped upon his brother-in-law and his sister ? You know that for my part I never mention them to him, and in the general interest I should wish to conceal from him everything that affects me personally. But the newspapers and your debates themselves show the whole of Europe how the Assembly permits royalty to be degraded and the King's person to be insulted. The Addresses read to the Assembly within the last few days prove that there is no way or no will to prevent such unseemliness. I hope and earnestly desire that the Emperor may discern who is responsible for all this, and that he may distinguish between them and those who are determined to do good, to establish law and order and to restore peace and unity. But will these talented persons ever succeed in imposing their will on the mob ? I agree that if M. de M. were here he could support these gifted persons much better than I. But once again, will he consent to come before being convinced that these intentions are being realised, that order is being restored, that royalty is recognised, the King honoured, individual security assured, and above all that international law respected without which there can be no intercourse between nations ? ”

To this interrogation the Queen's counsellors replied :

" No. 5, the 30th of July.

"Time is too short and too occupied for a detailed reply to the Queen's note.

"The present situation will not last long. Let the Queen be persuaded that the treatment she complains of, a treatment which cannot be justified, will only strengthen public opinion in her favour as soon as that opinion is free to declare itself.

"The debates in the Assembly need not alarm the Queen, seeing that their results are good. Public opinion is rapidly veering round in favour of order, and those who are accustomed to observe public events do not hesitate to prophesy that sedition is drawing to an end. Five or six addresses which are the result of wire-pulling,¹ cannot efface the impression of more than a hundred in favour of the decree of the 16th and the vigorous acts which followed it. If they contain here and there expressions which wound, the general meaning is good, and that is what we must consider. After all, everything cannot be done in a day. But we can promise and guarantee a happy issue ; and with strength of mind and character one can always reckon on that.

"If the Queen has cause for complaint in her own household, can she fail to appreciate the consideration with which she has been treated in the National Assembly, where, throughout the discussions, her name has not been mentioned ? It is for her to realise the difference between this public consideration of her and those private annoyances which distress reasonable folk, but which at least do not degrade her. Far from leading public opinion in a dangerous direction, they will serve to remove dissension and to increase that interest which it is so important should take its place.

¹ Against the maintenance of Monarchy and in favour of a Republic.

“Those in whom the Queen has confided have promised her a happy issue. They guarantee that it will take place. They will speed it as far as is possible. Hitherto they have relied on her courage. Far from reproaching her with her candid statement of what afflicts and wounds her, they venture to rely on her communicating to them her inmost thoughts.

“Though the necessity of employing in the important and critical affairs time, strength and such influence and power they may possess may not permit them to remove immediately the cause of her complaint, she will at any rate find in them that true and deep interest which will alleviate her suffering, though it may not completely abolish the cause.”

Meanwhile events moved quickly ; one after another alarming signs appeared and seemed to belie the assurances of tranquillity, of concord and of security lavished on the Queen by her counsellors in all their letters.

On the 17th of July the Republicans met on the Champ-de-Mars to protest against the decree issued by the National Assembly on the 16th, which declared the King inviolable and restored his authority. They demanded the revocation of this decree, the abdication of Louis XVI and the organisation of another executive. In the midst of the crowd, Danton, standing by the altar of the Fatherland, led those petitions which were received with great applause. But a terrible riot followed that applause. Inside the framework of the altar two men were discovered hidden. Had these persons merely taken refuge there in order to hear better and escape from the crowd, or had they sinister projects ? The crowd thought it was to blow up the patriots by setting fire to some barrel of powder hidden under the altar. In one furious onslaught they were seized and hanged from a lamp-post. The mob stuck their heads on pikes and bore them in triumph.

At the news of the riot, Bailly and the municipal counsellors, preceded by the red flag and followed by a battalion of grenadiers, began to march to the Champ-de-Mars. Then La Fayette hastened up with his cavalry and one or two cannon. He addressed the mob. The people cried, "Down with the bayonets!" and threw stones. The troops fired on the crowd; more than a hundred fell.

The Republican party, which had just declared itself, was exasperated. In the Assembly party-conflict grew more and more violent. The incapacity of the authorities to control the crowd became more and more obvious. Everywhere the sections had the upper hand. Round the Tuileries riots and threatenings were constantly occurring.

In the face of these manifestations of hostility the Queen ever displayed the same courage and the same self-control, but she was deeply grieved. Was this the tranquillity, the restoration of order which her counsellors were always promising and guaranteeing her? She began to wonder whether she were not the plaything of their illusions, whether she were not mistaken in trusting to them, in allying herself with the Constitutionals in order to save the Monarchy. Were they not deceiving her, deceiving themselves perhaps, when they stated that the Assembly and the people wished for the preservation of royalty, that peace and order would be restored under the government of a constitutional king?

She did not wish to break with them, but she was haunted by doubt, she hesitated, her notes grew rarer and less frank.

Barnave and his friends were not slow to notice the Queen's change of attitude. On the 5th of August they wrote to her:

"From the Queen's last note it is easy to see that she is under the influence of new impressions. Certain

isolated incidents are nothing when the main course of events remains constant and continues to point to the same end. It is only wavering resolution that can cause this end to fail in its realisation. Our resolution is unfaltering. It is sufficient to save France and the Monarchy; for isolated they can do nothing.

“We have said that when the Queen declared her resolution we decided to believe in it. And now, when our resolution is pronounced, when all our motives are known, when their disinterestedness and their purity do not permit of any fear that they can be changed, when for a whole month we have been exercising over public opinion and public affairs an influence which, had it not been for us, no one would ever have dared, how can our resolution be doubted?

“If we have prized highly the Queen’s confidence, it was when she honoured us with her esteem. The Queen knows that we did not solicit that esteem. The circumstances in which, for the first time during the Revolution, we were brought into relation with her, perhaps justified that confidence, yet the Queen apparently wishes to subject it to a further trial.

“The revision [of the Constitution] will soon be completed. This task, in the eyes of Europe which will be undeceived, must do honour to the Assembly. If it arouse discontent among the privileged classes, it will satisfy all the intelligent supporters of monarchical government. We shall be honoured by having taken part in this wise undertaking as well as in the wise measures which have preceded it and in those which shall succeed it.

“Let the Queen remember that she alone is mistress of her fate, that the hour is critical, that she must not place her hopes and give her support to two different systems, that everything she does should be clear and not liable to two interpretations. Let her think well and she

will understand how one may bind and how one may repulse those who, in dealings wherein they are actuated by sincere and keen interest and display all that courage and honesty can require, will accept no reward other than complete confidence."

This reply was far from dissipating all the Queen's doubts; but it was a new appeal to her confidence. Her counsellors asked her to rely on them to the end, and promised that if she would all would go well. Meanwhile there were many matters on which she hoped to be reassured, matters which required much more detailed explanation. If only it were possible to meet, to talk freely, all these problems might be solved. She wrote on the 7th of August (No. 7) :

"The answer which was given me on Friday makes me regret more than ever that there is no intermediary to negotiate between us. There are thousands of things that may be said, thousands of details that may be explained which cannot be written. Hence the apparent reticence and mistrust of my last letter. It is but natural that those who know so little of me should misjudge my character. But they must know that nothing and nobody can persuade me to follow a course or to adopt an idea which is not dictated by my mind and my reason.

"Since my return from Varennes I have wished to communicate with those persons who have inspired me with confidence, who seemed to me the strongest, the most courageous, and in possession of means the most likely to restore calm and happiness. I have desired it and still desire it, because I believe I could be useful in the discussion of matters that I have learned to understand, not through knowledge—I do not possess any—but through experience, gained by seventeen years of silently observing public affairs from a distance. I only desire peace and

that the King should possess the means of governing and making his people happy. By people I do not mean simply the privileged classes—they have no cause of complaint—I mean everyone. I wrote on Thursday and to-day I repeat : I am far from demanding impossibilities, all I desire is the public good and the re-establishment of order.

“ I do not wish to say anything about the Constitution ; but paper in hand, and in conversation, I should like to discuss it and to be enlightened concerning it.

“ I will conclude with this remark. If I had wished to break off our negotiations or to deviate from the path I have followed for six weeks, nothing obliged me to desire that M. Duport¹ should be added to those persons to whom I write. I know his opinions ; but I also know his mind and his ability ; and when one is as single-minded as I, and when one’s only desire is the public weal, one need fear no one. One has nothing to lose by being known.”

Then the Queen’s correspondents promised to send her the text of the revised Constitution in order that she might discuss it with the King, who would be called upon to ratify it.

“ *This 9th August.*

“ The revision of the Constitution for the moment absorbs all attention. Every effort will be made to render the work as perfect as possible ; and if, as may be expected, it receives no fundamental alteration, it will, once confidence is re-established [presumably between the King and his people], clothe with sufficient dignity the executive power, and equip it with adequate means for the exercise of government. . . .

“ Every effort should be made to strengthen this con-

¹ André Duport, whom the Assembly had commissioned to examine Louis XVI with regard to his attempted flight.

fidence ; and this should be the King's endeavour when the Constitution is presented to him.

“ The Queen will shortly receive all the details of the Constitution with the opinions of her correspondents as to what should be the conduct of herself and the King in such a circumstance. We will give our views on this subject to M. de Mont[morin], who alone ostensibly can give advice. By following as far as possible her counsellors' advice the Queen will restore happiness and tranquillity to France. Her counsellors hope that she will, both for her own sake and because they delight to owe her gratitude and to place in her confidence which nothing can shake. To hold any kind of position after a revolution one must have taken some part in bringing it about. The Queen has yet time, but only just.

“ Marie Antoinette is about once more to become Queen of France. To her as Queen it will matter little that Ministers make laws which may be annulled by parliaments, or that a law passed by the National Assembly must be ratified by the King, who, in his veto, possesses a power vastly superior to any he exercised under a personal monarchy. In relations with foreign powers the King represents the nation. Within the kingdom everything is done in his name. The number of appointments he is entitled to make in the diplomatic service, the army, the treasury, and the law is still very considerable. His civil list is superior to that of any other European sovereign. What more does he need to be King ? Law must be administered and disorder cease. The time is rapidly approaching when it will. Opinion and respect must unite with the Constitution to make him King.

“ The Queen must not expect to see as she once did everything bowing to her sovereign will ; but she may still hope to find herself surrounded by the ardent affection of a Court, and by the homage of a great nation. She may

exercise a great influence over public affairs if the nation believe her to be on its side, and those who by their character have come to lead the people may frankly and openly confer with her.

“In less than a year France, Paris, will have completely changed. Ease, industry, art, pleasure will have succeeded that disorder and lack of ease which necessarily accompany a revolution. A nation made for enjoyment will be eager to make up for lost time.”

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW CONSTITUTION

NEVERTHELESS, days went by, the clauses of the new Constitution were passed by the Assembly one by one, and yet the text of the Constitution which her correspondents promised to send the Queen in order that she might discuss it with the King, who was to ratify it, did not reach her.

On the 25th of August she wrote to them :

“If I have delayed writing to you, it was because every day I expected the document promised me so long ago. I am quite aware that as long as the discussions are still taking place no definite and final text can be sent ; but I admit that I am very anxious for plain speaking, for replies to my questions and to the objections I have made in various communications. One occurs to me at this moment. These gentlemen say that the Constitution is very monarchical. I confess that I wish to be enlightened on this point. I wish to know in what respects it is monarchical.

“As for what they say of ‘personal interests being considered later’ and of ‘all actions being in accordance with the law,’ I agree with them perfectly. I realise that one must be consistent, that the choice [of Ministers and high public functionaries] must be in accordance with the principles laid down. But if it be a question of dismissing those who have long been devoted to us in order to replace them by others, nothing on earth will ever induce me to

comply, and I say the same of the King. These gentlemen must be convinced of this. Let them remember what I said to M. Barnave and repeated in my first note, that I will hesitate at nothing in which I see the public good, but that I will not submit to petty tyranny and persecution. From whomsoever it come, I have a horror of it. This is the opinion of both of us, and it will never change. I am glad to state it once for all, in order that enlightened persons and those who mean well may act accordingly. They will discern in this the frankness which I have always promised them, and of which I have already given them more than one proof. I desire nothing better than to continue it, provided only that those persons will put me in a position to do so by informing me beforehand, and with greater confidence, of all those great interests which are now at stake."

A reply was sent to her three days later.

"This 28th of August.

"The Queen reproaches us with lacking candour and with having kept her waiting for an explanation of those important affairs which she is called upon to consider.

"Ought not those who are thus reproached themselves to complain? They will not mention those continuous occupations which for some time have absorbed them. They have been the chief cause of their delay in replying. This correspondence they neither expected nor solicited. Yet they eagerly undertook it as a means of rendering service to their country and to those whose fate is so intimately bound up with it. It was not duty alone that prompted them to carry on this correspondence, but a keen and deep interest in all that concerned the Queen.

"The more, during the Revolution's course, they found themselves driven to oppose her, the greater claim

did her courage and her misfortune make upon them and the happier were they when circumstances enabled them for the sake of the Revolution itself to try and render her service.

“The Queen cannot have been ignorant of their attitude towards her. It was explained to her at great length in a letter. They hoped by this frankness to strengthen and confirm the confidence which the Queen had placed in them of her own accord. But it appeared to produce a contrary effect. From this time the Queen’s letters appeared to grow colder and more reserved.

“Whoever read her correspondence might think that the greater the zeal manifested in her cause the more exacting became her demands. Such an impression suffices to destroy confidence. In strong characters it cannot lessen the sentiment of duty nor the fidelity promised to the Queen when she was persuaded to adopt this line of action. But it chills and discourages all those impulses which flow from the heart when they do not arise from self-interest.

“Will the Queen not be lenient to those who, in return for all they have done during the past two months and for what they may yet do, merely ask her to consider them, to know them for what they are, and to act in consequence ?

“Since the King’s departure everything seems to have united the Republican party against him, and thus a faction hitherto insignificant has acquired immense influence. That part of the aristocracy which has joined the Princes is absolutely opposed to the King’s party. The weaker minds are distributed between the two ; and they, following the example of the King, whom public opinion seemed to condemn, leave the country. But when a few stalwart souls dared to declare openly for the King, all that was monarchical in the popular party rallied round them. Nevertheless, it was against these very men that the King’s

memorandum¹ had been directed. Separated from the anti-Revolution party by irreconcilable hatred, they were not afraid of incurring in addition the hatred of all who were most ardent and consequently most formidable on the opposite side.

“The nation was for them, but only because it recognised in them a capacity for leadership as well as frankness, courage and moderation. The nation would have been just as likely to join the factions had they been led with skill and energy. Who can doubt it? Nevertheless, those men desire nothing but to bring an end to the Revolution and to benefit their country; and now that to-day a decree closes against them the door of their ambition,² they disapprove of it because its effect will be disastrous, yet it does not make them change their conduct or diminish their ardour or their resolution.

“Is it not true that at this moment they are holding in check all those parties who are opposed to the King? Who persists in rousing public opinion against the Republicans? Who has just wrung submission from that faction which even in its submission displayed such force and such power of resistance? Who maintained within the Assembly that unity and that vigour which are driving the Princes to despair, and are so alienating the European Powers from their cause that they may be reduced to abandoning their enterprise? If the Queen would know whom the factions fear she has only to observe whom they detest and calumniate. If one of the factions were to win the day, who would be their first victims?

“Before the King’s departure we had only one mischance to fear, that chance was extremely improbable—

¹ The memorandum left by the King at the time of his departure for Montmédy explaining the reasons for his flight.

² The decree which rendered it impossible for the members of the Constituent to be re-elected for the Legislative.

the triumph of the anti-Revolutionary party. To-day everything is against us except the parties of the Constitution and of the King—a party which may now count on the nation's adherence because a strong hand repulses the factions which are ever trying to attack it. But this party will fail, unless by the wisdom of their conduct the King and the Queen do not complete the conquest of those who are opposed to them, if they do not win public opinion to their side and to that of the Constitution with which their existence is intimately associated.

“May the Queen take to heart these verities which are now about to decide her destiny. May she deign to remember that these same truths were spoken to her at a time when only the noble and pure sentiments could, in her then position, have aroused interest in her in the heart of one who had never previously known her, and whose relations with her would have ceased at the time of her journey had not the Queen invited him to renew them. We are far from recalling this as a reproach. The Queen's position would render such a reproach extremely bitter. When one is unable to converse by word of mouth it is so easy to misunderstand one another; and for a lack of confidence of which we may have complained, we should never nourish any resentment which, under the circumstances, might be indelicate and out of place. But by all the proofs we have given the Queen of our zeal, by all our anxiety for a happy ending to this great crisis, we entreat her, we urge her, to place implicit confidence in the advice we give her. If our counsels are followed in detail, then we will promise the King and Queen public consideration and the legal and constitutional establishment of the Royal power. But if any other course be adopted, it is impossible to tell what disaster will follow.

“*The Constitution is very monarchical.*¹ With the

¹ Underlined in the original.

exception of the clause prohibiting members of the executive government from belonging to the Legislature, there is not a single spring of vigour lacking in our Constitution.

“Every year the King must submit to the Legislature the matters which he thinks it should consider. The Ministers may sit in the Assembly to see how these matters are received. The King will describe them in general. Once a law passed, the King possesses a right of ratification or of suspension. It is obvious that the Legislature, which is essentially the national voice, is pervaded by Royal influence before, during and after the passing of a law. A tactless government might profit little from even such great prerogatives; but a tactful government, enjoying public confidence and the advantage of a permanent Ministry, while the duration of the Legislature is only four years, might, unless prevented by public opinion and the nation’s representatives, become almost the sole legislative power.

“The executive power resides entirely with the King. Only in home administration, in the assessment of taxes, does the Constitution give him agents whom he does not himself appoint. And, as soon as experience makes it appear necessary, the entire executive may be and will be entrusted to persons nominated by the King. But even now, those whom the people nominate are none the less subject to the Sovereign’s authority.

“The judicature is always and necessarily independent of the King. In England the King nominates judges; but cases, even civil cases, are decided by juries, and the judges, of whom there are very few, merely apply the law. Moreover, as the judges are created for life, they are not dependent on the Sovereign. In France the King nominates commissioners to the tribunals; and there they exercise considerable influence, for they may appeal against sentences, carry cases to the Court of Cassation, denounce and prosecute all disturbers of public order. But these

commissioners, far from being, like the judges, independent of the Royal power, are subject to all the orders the executive likes to give them. Further, they are infinitely more numerous than the English judges whom the King nominates. Their salaries are insufficient, but so are those of all public officers ; and their salaries will increase as the nation delivers itself from the burden she has assumed of annuities to its creditors and the clergy.

“As for foreign affairs, everyone agrees that the King has all the power due to him, except that of finally determining peace in certain cases. But even this power, only to be used in rare cases, he will acquire when the Government has won the nation’s confidence.

“The army, the navy, indirect taxation and the treasury are all completely under the King’s control.

“That he should possess the right of dissolving the legislative body is impossible owing to the brief term of its existence. But for its absence, this very brevity and the regulation that no deputy can be re-elected after four years will atone. The latter is more advantageous to the Sovereign than the power of dissolution, which would not have enabled him to prevent the people electing the same representatives, while now all the members of the Assembly, no matter how popular, cease after four years to represent the nation, while the Ministers remain and continue to sit in the Assembly without needing to be elected.

“The King will not possess, to the extent of that of the English Sovereign, the power of nominating men of his party for the Legislative Body. But as, for the present, we are concerned not so much with liberty as with power, that unwise clause which renders a man eligible as deputy only for the department in which he resides, will soon give the executive means for getting rid of those whom it fears. Moreover, not needing to procure the election of the leaders of this party, since those leaders are the

Ministers who sit on the Right in the Assembly, he will possess a power of opposing the electors which, united to the non-re-eligibility condition, will give him an almost unlimited influence in the Legislature.

“As for his other prerogatives, the number of appointments the King may dispose of in the army, the fleet, the diplomatic body, the judicature and the treasury is infinitely greater than in England.

“The title of Representative of the Nation, the most majestic title a sovereign can bear, enhances his dignity and will help to maintain his power. The title given to the princes of his house, whose career depends entirely upon the King but whose dignity adds to the lustre of the throne, is rendered more august by contrast with the equality which exists among all other citizens.

“Finally, the splendour with which the King’s Civil List, much ampler than in any other European country, will permit him to surround the throne, will increase its brilliance.

“All these things those may perceive who, introducing no private interest into public affairs, merely demand what parts are assigned by the Constitution to the nation and to the King.

“The Constitution is *very monarchical* we have said. There are still a few details lacking. They may be added by the Legislatures. The Constitution foresees it and gives them the power which experience will lead them to use. As for those constitutive articles to which one might take exception, only one is against the King, two are contrary to liberty and give back to the King much more than the first takes from him.

“From all this there results that no prince in Europe is so solidly seated upon his throne as the King of France will be when he has public opinion on his side as well as the Constitution. All troubles will be at an end once the King and Queen win confidence and make themselves loved.

"This letter is already too long for us to enter into further details. Nevertheless, here are a few points. We will only give them to the Queen in outline so that she may reflect upon them. The details she will receive from M. de Montmorin as we have arranged them.

"When the Constitution is announced to the King, when he is invited in general terms to choose his guard and his place of abode,¹ the King should reply with dignity that his mind being free in everything and everywhere, he will probably give them his reply in Paris itself. As for his guard, when the time comes for its formation he will take them from the Garde Nationale.

"It will be all the more fitting that the King should accept the Constitution, seeing that since his departure many things mentioned in his memorandum have been considered.²

"At the close of the Constitution means will be indicated by which it may be amended in points experience has shown to be bad.

"The King will accept the Constitution in a letter to the Assembly; and the letter should be couched in terms of dignity and reconciliation. After having stated that he fears certain parts of the Constitution may thwart the action of the Government, for it will be fitting for him to foresee and announce what will happen, seeing that it is one of the surest means for reforming the Constitution, he will invite parties to unite and he will lead them in the establishment of order and the execution of the law. He should express his desire for an amnesty for those who were accused at the time of his journey, and also for those who were arrested during the troubles which followed his

¹ In order to go to some provincial town where he may ratify the Constitution in full liberty.

² The memorandum which the King left at the time of his flight to explain the causes of his departure.

return. This last part of his letter would be not merely popular but profoundly wise. For the King it would be a way of defeating the hostile party and heaping coals of fire on its head. In the same letter the King will express his intention of adopting a new course of action ; he will relate his negotiations with the Princes and he will invite the Assembly to await their issue before having recourse to legal means.

“The Assembly will be eager to grant the King’s requests.

“A noble, a majestic proclamation will announce to the kingdom the King’s acceptance of the Constitution, and it will at the same time declare peace, the re-establishment of order and the reign of law.

“The Queen will write to the Assembly. Her letter will convey a fine idea of her character. It will inspire confidence in all that she promises. It will for all time reflect as in a mirror the character of Marie Antoinette.

“But this will avail nothing if the King and Queen do not alter their behaviour, if they do not go to the play and appear in public, if the King does not resume his accustomed pleasures, if he does not furnish his château of Les Tuileries.

“None the less necessary will it be for them to surround themselves with persons whom the public can trust. The King and Queen will create court offices and will not fill them exclusively with anti-revolutionists. Anxiety will be set at rest, confidence will be restored. Things will resume their natural course.

“The mere choice of the King’s guard, if made soon, will be a means of gaining credit and popularity with the people of Paris ; and when one is popular in Paris one is popular throughout the kingdom.

“The expression of gratitude must be reserved for the future. When confidence is restored, when public

order is re-established, when childish fears no longer occupy the public mind, then proofs of remembrance may be given to persons whom to reward to-day would ruin alike the giver and the receiver of the reward.

“It is hardly possible to add anything to this letter, which is already so long. To these subjects one may return after receiving the Queen’s precious ideas on what has here been set forth. If our counsels be followed in detail, then with our lives will we answer for the result and we will do everything in our power to assure it. But if the Queen were so unhappy as to let herself be carried in an opposite direction, everything would be undone, everything would be lost. We hope that the Queen will consult no one but herself, that she will remember the past, that she will not permit her thoughts to be influenced by emotions which are only too natural in her present situation. We ask for confidence; but for our part, in the service of those objects which we have explained, we may be relied on to display unbounded zeal, constancy and courage.”

This letter was therefore an ultimatum as well as a manifesto, a declaration of principles and a programme of future action. The acceptance of this Constitution thus described to her in outline was the necessary condition for the pacification of France, for the reconciliation of parties and for the return of order and prosperity. It was, in fact, the only basis on which Monarchy could be established and maintained. The Queen did not fail to give it her full attention. Ignoring for the moment the reproaches made by her correspondents in the first part of their long letter, their reflections on the past, their reminders of the engagements she had entered into, she endeavoured to study the details they gave her as to the position assigned to the King by this new covenant which he was required to sign.

On the whole, considerable power was given to the King by this revised Constitution. To us, accustomed as we are to infinitely more liberal, more democratic ideas as to the division of power, quite a large share of privileges seems to have been left to the King—a share much larger than that allowed by the English Constitution, on which this one seemed to a large extent to have been modelled. It proved, at any rate, that its authors sincerely desired to firmly reseat the King upon the throne, and to surround him with all the guarantees necessary for the maintenance of his authority and prestige.

But the value of any Constitution depends upon its capacity for enduring and remaining inviolate. Now, in the then condition of men's minds, in the rendings of parties, in the constant changes of public opinion and in the increasing contempt for public authority, what guarantees for its duration and inviolability could this Constitution possibly offer? That which one Legislature had done another could undo.

This was the weakness which immediately struck Marie Antoinette when, with the King, she began to study in her correspondents' letter the outline of the revised Constitution.

On the 31st of August, three days after receiving their letter, she wrote to them (No. 8):

“Having only a few moments free for writing, I cannot reply in detail to the last note. I will merely confine myself to one or two remarks. There are certainly advantages to be reaped by the King and the Monarchy from the new Constitution as it is represented by *ces messieurs*. But what is going to assure its execution? The first conditions are surely public confidence and popularity. But anarchy in its most lawless form is breaking out again everywhere. Laws are powerless if there be not force behind them. And

where is that force ? Who will answer for the next Legislature ? In spite of the proclamation of this Constitution, in spite of decrees and oaths, who can say that it will not change everything in its turn ? If the Republican party wants to upset the Constitution, who is to prevent it ? I might not perhaps be so anxious if we were not on the eve of a new Legislature. My trust in the courage, the firmness and the goodwill of those answerable for it, would reassure me if the first question were to establish order, which cannot be established save by a king whose authority is in agreement with and supported by the law. But it is the nature of men, and specially of mediocre men, to wish to change everything. They desire it all the more because they know popularity will accrue rather to those who disturb than to those who maintain order. Now the King's power and authority and the existence of his Ministers are not yet sufficiently established to enable him to contend successfully with all these difficulties.

“ As for what must be done at the time of the Constitution's acceptance, I quite agree that our actions must conform to our words. But I cannot fail to protest against one proposition, against one thing which might do great harm. Why should I write to the Assembly ? I have given sufficient proof, on all occasions, that the King's opinions and decisions were common to us both. There is no need for me to give further assurances. Moreover, it seems to me (and far be it from me to complain) that the Assembly has always left me out of everything. It would then be inconsistent and tactless of me to push myself forward. What would be the good of such an action ? It could but give the enemy cause to blaspheme. That enemy would straightway be applauded ; and my letter would have failed to achieve its object. My complaint is not dictated by any personal feeling. My soul is above such considerations. But I am convinced that when the

King ought to receive all the respect which is his due, it would be very unseemly for the same respect not to be shown to her who is nearest to him. I shall therefore not write. But whenever the opportunity presents itself of proving that the King and I think alike, I shall eagerly seize that opportunity. Every interest that moves me, every feeling that fills my heart, is centred in the King and his son. For them and in them I exist. In everything else I efface myself completely."

The Queen's correspondents were not slow to reassure her and relieve her anxiety. Their faith in the future remained unshaken, their optimism was absolute. Every difficulty will disappear as soon as the King shall accept the Constitution. The tide of public opinion is running in his favour. His will is bound to assert itself, and to him would be due the return of peace and concord.

"No. 10, this 1st September (1791).

"We have but a few moments in which to write to the Queen. She will soon receive a more detailed reply to her last observations.

"In the course of the Revolution we have learnt how to estimate the vicissitudes of public opinion. That opinion will soon turn in the King's favour, if his conduct in these circumstances is all that it should be.

"All the mistakes made in the past and those which will be made in the future, will be to his advantage provided he does not make any of his own; and that is extremely easy.

"After prolonged disorder and when a nation needs peace, the Royal power may soon reassert itself provided the King will act so as to win his people's love. Everything tends to show that the majority in the next Legislature will be prudent. It cannot fail to be if such is the move-

ment of public opinion, and the movement will be such if the King's conduct wins the people for his cause.

"The horizon is clearing. Let us take care not to darken it with new clouds. Peace and order will be rapidly restored because everyone is desiring them and striving after them. Let the King proclaim that he is their restorer and everyone will believe him.

"The King's only concern should be to avoid new disturbances and to gain the confidence of his people. His power is rooted in the Constitution. It will be established and will grow quickly if only he does not provoke some new outbreak which would destroy it. Any new disturbance, even if it did not destroy Monarchy, would destroy the King.

"Whoever does not tell the Queen so is either her enemy or a bad judge of the situation.

"All the Assembly's recent acts are favourable to the King. The means provided for the perfecting of the Constitution would tend to accentuate its monarchical character.

"The clause requiring that the Constitution should be presented to the King [for his acceptance] is quite right. The clause proposed by M. Camus¹ was not directed against the King, whom, throughout this session, the Assembly has defended by approving resolutions against those who attacked him. This clause, like all the faults committed by the Assembly, results from a party movement directed against a few reactionaries, against whom it was desirable that all the gates should be closed through which they might return to public affairs. But, as it is not these reactionaries but the public welfare which is at stake, one

¹ Armand Gaston Camus had required the Red Book containing the expenditure and the pensions of the Civil List should be presented to the Assembly, in order to prove "the cupidity of the courtiers" and of "the Queen's protégés."

ought not to consider that these errors of conduct were directed against oneself.

“Anything done now to limit the King’s liberty will decrease his responsibility and will soon increase his power. Not in years but in months these results will appear. The future will depend on the King’s speech or letter when he accepts the Constitution. We shall make known to him our views on this subject either directly through the Queen or through M. de Montmorin. We should like to know beforehand what the King has decided. This first act of the King is so important, and is awaited by the seditious with such a malicious hope, that the State’s destiny as well as the King’s and the Queen’s may depend upon it.

“We will write to the Queen touching that which concerns her personally.”

CHAPTER VII

THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONSTITUTION— THE AMNESTY DECREE

MARIE ANTOINETTE was then very anxious as to the fate of those who had assisted the King and Queen at the time of their flight to Varennes. Could they be condemned for having obeyed the King? Such a condemnation would be a reflection on the King's honour. Whilst he was being thus insulted, who would believe that the King was free and that he voluntarily accepted the Constitution? Her correspondents proposed that the King, while announcing to the Assembly his acceptance of the revised Constitution, should ask for their amnesty as well as for that of those who had been arrested and condemned on account of their being involved in the affair of the 17th of July on the Champ-de-Mars. But to include in this amnesty those who had served the King would be to recognise their guilt; and that guilt was his own since he had asked them for this service.

On this subject the Queen wrote :

“ No. 11, this 4th September.

“ M. de Mont[morin], either this evening or to-morrow morning, is to speak to *ces messieurs* of a matter which seems to me right and which I have very much at heart. It is impossible for the King to concern himself with those important affairs which will be brought before him this

evening, and it is impossible for him to consider himself free unless those who have been arrested and who are now in prison, under the sole charge of having served him and obeyed his commands, are set at liberty. They cannot be included in the general amnesty, seeing that their only fault is the King's. Honour and good feeling forbid it. I address myself to *ces messieurs* because I am firmly convinced that their sense of justice and their loyalty will cause them to see how essential it is that this our wish should meet with no opposition. I am pleased to think that they will help me to prove my gratitude to those who have deserved it."

The Queen's correspondents hastened to agree, but only conditionally. On the same day they replied to Marie Antoinette :

"No. II, *this 4th September.*

"Events are progressing most favourably. The King's reply yesterday made the best impression.¹ The line of action traced out for the Queen must always be followed. The results will prove more beneficial and more rapid than anyone dared to hope.

"It is just, it is necessary that the King's acceptance should be accompanied by everything that may conduce to the dignity of his person. Thus, as soon as ever the acceptance is pronounced, the companions of his journey should be set free. We promise, we swear that so it shall be, that it shall be done with acclamation, in the most honourable terms, and as soon as the King's acceptance has been pronounced. But those who advise the Queen to demand the earlier liberation of the prisoners merely take advantage of her tender heart. Such a course would render the conduct of the Assembly uncertain. It would

¹ Louis XVI's reply to the deputation which came to announce to him that the revision of the Constitution was complete.

revive suspicion. It would strengthen all the factions, who are lying in wait for an opportunity to turn the present favourable tendency of events. It would renew those harmful discussions which should henceforth be avoided. It is right for the Queen to object to the inclusion in the amnesty of the innocent. They ought not to be and they will not be.

“There is one thing of which the Queen ought to beware : almost all those who surround her have at heart interests other than hers ; and those who might be trustworthy counsellors, not having grasped the true spirit of the Revolution or comprehended by what means to attain their ends, are in the present state of affairs as far from being able to indicate the right path as those whose secret intention it is to mislead.

“On our lives we will answer for the event, for the restoration of confidence in the King and for the granting to him of the authority necessary for the good of the State, the splendour of the throne, and the restoration of order. We guarantee that those results, if only our advice be followed, will occur earlier than would be thought possible.

“We persist in declaring that the King’s speech¹ will be decisive. If, as is improbable, the speech M. de Montmorin is to show us does not meet with our approval, we will tell the Queen frankly and we will send her an outline of the speech which should be given. In it the King will appear to advantage, he will enhance his dignity ; he will win the confidence and the affection of all classes without taking upon himself any of the mistakes that have been made. Then, after a few months of a constant policy, the French Monarchy will shine with all that brilliance which should emanate from the first throne in Europe. It will, however, possess the stability which

¹ The speech he was to make on accepting the Constitution.

arises from a Constitution founded upon the will of the nation.

“If the King act wisely then, so, we promise, will the next Legislature. It is already being formed in a straightforward manner; everywhere the club cabals have been defeated. We shall possess excellent means for keeping it in the right way. But more than anything is it indispensable that the King should have public opinion on his side.

“As to the letter which the Queen ought to write, our opinion remains unchanged. For the sake of public peace, for the sake of the Queen’s own prestige, she ought to declare herself openly. We are planning for her a great career, one that shall harmonise with her character. All that capacity and influence she is known to possess ought not, through her silence, to remain useless to the public cause, to the restoration of public confidence and of authority. If, however, she be seen to hold aloof and to refuse to take openly either side, then that capacity and influence will cause nothing but anxiety and will thwart all our plans.

“Finally when, in the new régime, we want to give the Queen a prominent and influential position, how disappointing it will be to find her refusing it!

“However, we will postpone this discussion, seeing that the time for the Queen to write is still remote. But it is important that henceforth she should make it known by her words that the line of conduct the King has now adopted meets with her approval. If it were possible to see the Queen, she would be convinced by that great body of evidence which can only be slightly alluded to in written correspondence. She must, however, perceive in our letters that desire to persuade which can only arise from profound conviction. This conviction is based on a thorough knowledge of all the elements of the Revolution

and of the present condition of affairs. The future will justify it."

Thus, according to the Queen's counsellors, the re-establishment of Monarchy and of a stable Government depended on the way in which the King accepted the Constitution and on the words he uttered on that occasion. It depended also on the attitude assumed by Marie Antoinette herself. It was highly important for her to consent to appear, to assume a prominent part and by her energy and her decision to supplement Louis XVI's weakness of character. Now, on those questions *ces messieurs* had their ideas, the Queen had hers. So it was on the amnesty question. How could people who were not guilty be pardoned? You might as well pardon the King for having declared that he was under constraint, and for having made use of them to facilitate his flight. The Queen was horrified at the idea that their devotion should be thus rewarded.

She wrote :

"No. 12, this 4th of September.

"I fail to understand how those who are innocent are to be included in the general amnesty and only to be liberated when the liberty of all should be declared.

"I have not time to reply to the rest of the letter. I shall be glad to learn the ideas of *ces messieurs* touching the King's speech. I will also see what M. de Mont[morin] has to propose. But I think the King will merely listen to everyone's ideas and then compose his speech himself.

"As to my letter,¹ I am still of the same opinion. But I cannot now enter into details. I will postpone them to another day."

The Queen's correspondents began to grow anxious

¹ To the Assembly.

at her persistent refusal to assume openly the part they assigned her. They replied :

“ No. 12, this 5th September.

“ It is impossible not to feel extremely anxious at the disposition evinced by the Queen at a time which must for ever decide the fate of the Monarchy and especially that of the King.

“ Yesterday we conferred with the Ministers as to the time when the King ought to declare his interest in the persons associated with his journey. The unanimous opinion was that it should not be before his acceptance of the Constitution. M. de Montmorin may explain in detail his own reasons for such a conclusion. Here it suffices to say that, apart from the fact that before the acceptance the result of the King's action would be doubtful, and that after the acceptance it would certainly be loudly applauded, it would cause the King to lose all the advantages of the act of acceptance.

“ Finally, as all interest will be concentrated on the King, if his behaviour be such as to lead public opinion, if he make this declaration before his acceptance of the Constitution, it will happen that the public and the Assembly will feel that they have the upper hand. Consequently the satisfaction and the gratitude which his acceptance should occasion, the serious attention which should be given to any remarks he may make, will be diminished, and everyone will feel that the nation has already acquitted itself of any debt to the King, and that all the King has to do is to pay any debt he may owe the nation.

“ The Queen has too much insight not to realise that this result is sure to follow. It may prevent the declaration from having the effect which the Queen desires. It will certainly rob it of the enthusiastic approbation with which it would be welcomed if made at the right moment.

“With regard to the King’s speech, that is even more important. It is impossible to foretell the effect of any action on the public mind as it is at present, at least not without having closely studied it. The King and Queen will know perfectly before long what will impress it, what will establish confidence, what will strengthen authority. For the moment only those who have long lived in the heart of the vortex, and have studied all its movements can foresee its effects. A speech which to some would seem perfectly appropriate might strike an irreparable blow at the King’s person and at the Royal authority.”

But the Queen was far from desiring to ignore her counsellors’ advice concerning the speech the King was to make on accepting the Constitution. She fully realised the importance of the act, and she wished *ces messieurs* to give their opinion and to confer with the Ministers appointed to compose the speech.

“No. 13, this 6th September.

“I see that I expressed myself badly in my last note ; but this is the result of being obliged always to write. I am very far from desiring to conceal the King’s speech from those who, by acting with us, may bring about the result we all desire. I am anxious that they should communicate with M. de Mont[morin] as soon as possible, in order that we may know what would be wise and suitable to say, and in order that we on our side may express an opinion.

“I think that the King’s speech should be brief and dignified, in accordance with those desires for the welfare of his people and the establishment of peace and order which he has always shown. It seems to me that the speech should be as far from lengthy as possible.”

Then, in agreement with the Queen, her advisers set

forth the ground which, in their opinion, should be covered by this acceptance of the King.

“ No. 13, the 7th of September.

“ If, as we have reason to believe, we agree with M. de Montmorin as to the outline of the King’s speech, it might be presented to him to-morrow. The King might tell M. de Montmorin, who would inform us, what he thinks of this outline; and the speech might be definitely drawn up in three days.

“ The Queen cannot be too impressed with the necessity of hastening the moment when the King’s resolve is made known.

“ The King’s speech, or, if it be preferred, his letter, will be addressed by him to the Assembly and will precede by a day or two the time when he himself will come to affirm his acceptance with his own lips, and to take the oath to preserve the Constitution. The ceremony will be very simple but worthy of His Royal Majesty. The King will occupy the place of the President of the Assembly, who will conduct him to it. And there the King will declare his acceptance and take the oaths.

“ It is said that the King wishes to make certain remarks about the clergy and the nobility. If he does, everything will be lost. If the Monarchy is to continue and to prosper, it must henceforth be separated from the interests of the aristocracy. Moreover, why should the King, who in the declaration he left on his departure,¹ did not mention the clergy or the nobility, now refer to them when he accepts the new Constitution?

“ If the King should have already made an outline of his speech, he ought to communicate it as soon as possible to M. de Montmorin, in order that we may know it and pronounce upon it. Once again, everything depends on

¹ For Varennes.

the first impression. The King can either win or repulse public opinion. If the King can win public opinion and public confidence he will rapidly attain to that measure of power which is his due. The factions will all be conquered and their leaders annihilated. If, on the other hand, the King were to reject popular opinion when it was inclining towards him, the factions would take advantage, and soon the King, without power or supporters, would find that authority, disputed under various pretexts by the factions within and by the emigrants without, would declare itself against him.

“Let the Queen have the courage to conquer a kingdom. Surrounded by enemies, by false friends who are bitter and personal, it is still in her power to defeat them all; but she can only do so by allying herself with the popular party, the immense majority of the nation which only awaits the King’s adhesion to the principles the nation has adopted in order to follow him, to defend him against all, to honour him and to honour the Monarchy.

“M. de Montmorin is to see the Queen this morning. He is and must remain ignorant of our correspondence with her. But it is important for the Queen to let him know her views as to the King’s speech, and to tell him that with all her influence she will endeavour to persuade the King to adopt the speech which will be presented to him, provided always that it seems to her likely to realise the desired object, namely, that while maintaining the King’s dignity it promises to win for him the trust of his people.”

The next day the Queen replied :

“No. 14, the 8th September, evening.

“M. de Mont[morin] should show *ces messieurs* the proposed letter which has been submitted to the King. I think it far too long and not dignified enough. It seems to me that all that is necessary might be said, and said

better, in a few words. Why enter into so many details ? Is it in order to inspire confidence ? Anything said now will not do that. Sincerity can only be proved by firm and consistent action. Is it in order to convince the Assembly ? One page will do that better than fifteen. Those who are wise and wish for order are convinced already. The others never will be. Are these details intended for the people ? They will never read a paper of such length, and if they did they would not understand it. I think, therefore, that this proposed letter should be considerably amended, and I should like to have the opinion of *ces messieurs*. I entreat them not to mention this to M. de Mont[morin], who might think me disloyal to him. It is only because I desire that in future our words and our deeds should be in perfect accordance. That is why I attach so much importance to it."

The reply to this letter was not delayed. The Queen's counsellors accepted her suggestions.

" No. 14, this 9th September.

"The speech submitted to the King by M. de Montmorin was shown to us yesterday evening. We agree with the Queen that it might well be abridged and simplified, and that certain expressions lack dignity ; but as a whole the speech appeared to us suitable and in keeping with the King's character and situation.

"M. de Montmorin told us of the Queen's criticism of certain passages and we agreed with it. We have ourselves indicated a few other emendations, which tend to abridge the work and to make it nobler and simpler in style.

"We believe that the speech is to be submitted to us again to-day, after the corrections have been made, and we may propose some others, seeing that our opinion agrees with that of the Queen. But it must be admitted that the speech is well thought out, that the King deals

nobly and frankly with the most difficult incidents of his past conduct, that he takes up the most advantageous ground and produces no unfavourable impression. His words inspire one with a sense of his strength and loyalty. The speech will gain by being read and reread and thought upon every day. In order to confirm this good impression consistent conduct is certainly necessary, but this speech prepares and anticipates such conduct. Every deed the King performs in the spirit of this speech will recall the speech delivered on this solemn occasion. His words will prove the straightforwardness of his deeds and his deeds of his words. Thus they will mutually strengthen one another. If, as we believe, M. de Montmorin submits the speech to us to-day, we will write to the Queen to-morrow morning as to our opinion of the emendations.

“Public opinion is being prepared in the best possible manner. All hearts will rapidly return to the King and Queen. We supplicate her to bring herself to appear on every occasion in such a manner as to leave no doubt that she approves of the King’s conduct. Everything will be done to reconcile the people to her. And no sooner does she by outward acts reveal her goodwill than this reconciliation will occur more rapidly and more universally than she can think possible.”

But M. de Montmorin’s speech is not yet all that it should be. The Queen writes :

“No. 15, this 10th September.

“I have not by me the King’s proposed speech. M. de Montmorin read it to me this morning, because there were certain things to delete and certain ideas to be expressed differently. I criticised it somewhat, but, not having the paper before me, I cannot reproduce that criticism. I should like to know what *ces messieurs* think about it, and

I will reply with that candour which they have learnt to expect from me.

“I realise that the King’s acceptance of the Constitution ought to be prompt. Yet this act is of such importance for the rest of the King’s reign, that it would be better to postpone it for twenty-four hours, and to make it good, than to hurry unduly. I am extremely anxious that the King should be brief, noble, firm, especially that he should not appear to be making an apology—it is for others and for time to judge him—not to refer to his journey and to personal matters. The purity of his motives relieves him of all embarrassment. I think it would be more disastrous than advantageous to approach such a subject at such a time.

“I can’t reproduce from memory all that I said. I certainly forget a great part of it. Therefore I refer to *ces messieurs*, and I should like to see their ideas noted in the margin; to them I will add my own criticisms. My discretion may be relied upon. No one will know of the paper.”

A reply was sent to her the same day :

“*No. 15, this 10th September.*

“We have been unable to see M. de Montmorin, so we cannot reply to the Queen as we promised her yesterday.

“If the Queen will herself send us the speech with her remarks, we will try to meet her wishes either by further abridgment or by imparting to it suitable dignity. Afterwards she will do all she can to have it finally settled.

“In the meantime, while awaiting the speech and the Queen’s remarks, which we hope to receive to-morrow, we will endeavour to see M. de Montmorin to-day in order to prepare the way for these emendations, in accordance with the Queen’s opinion, which is also ours. That is to say, we

shall try to compress the speech and to impart to it a serious and simple style more in accordance with the King's dignity.

"We should have attained this result more quickly, had we ourselves in the beginning submitted a model speech to the Queen, who, after having approved of it, might have urged its acceptance. But, seeing that M. de Montmorin's ideas were something like those which the occasion demanded, we thought it well to introduce him into the business, allowing him to suggest an outline. And this plan is indeed the best, provided that finally the speech be couched in such a form as to secure its success."

Finally, the text of this important act was fixed and accepted by the King. The declaration in which he announced his acceptance of the Constitution was sent in due form to the Constituent Assembly.

The Queen had her way. The reasons for, as well as the consequences of, the attempted flight to Varennes were passed over in silence.



CHAPTER VIII

AFTER THE ACCEPTATION

WE know what reception this communication received when it was read before the Constituent Assembly on the 13th September. The great majority applauded. On the 14th September, when Louis XVI presented himself before the Assembly to countersign and swear the revised Constitution, he was received with enthusiasm, in spite of murmurs, hesitatingly repressed by the President, from some of the benches. But a popular demonstration, which occurred at the same time in front of the Tuileries, was taken wrongly, and ended in hostile manifestations. The populace, who wanted to give proof of its joy at the acceptance of the Constitution, encountered closed doors. The King had given orders to close them, fearing lest the Queen's apartments should be invaded; but the people saw in it evidence that it was suspect, and grew angry. It made noisy demonstration outside the Palace railings and would have carried the gates by assault.

Marie Antoinette was very sensibly affected. She writes to Fersen (19th October 1791):

“The people is what it always was—ready to do horrors. We are told that it is on our side, but I don't believe a word of it—at any rate not where I am concerned.”

Foreseeing what impression these events must make on the Queen's feelings, her correspondents try to reassure her.

“ No. 16, 15th September.

“ The Queen does not judge well of present circumstances if yesterday's events have power to discourage her. What happened in the Assembly was the result of a misunderstanding, for, with the exception of a certain number of individuals, all were of excellent disposition, and what weighs upon them at the moment is the thought that the King may be displeased.

“ A mistake was made in shutting the Tuileries. The Queen would have been enthusiastically greeted ; but it is still easy to recover the advantage that might have been gained at that instant, at other and similar moments which will be quick enough to present themselves.

“ Let the King and Queen continue to draw to themselves the confidence and affection of the people and they will soon occupy in reality the place assigned them under the Constitution, and their greatest enemies will be forced to treat them with that respect which is their due. To-day, *mistakes on the part of Assemblies are dangerous for Liberty, but not for the King.* His status depends on himself. The nation is weary of seeing anarchy and licence in the place of Liberty.

“ Power which shall not cease, while keeping within the limits assigned it by the Constitution, under the promise and leadership of the King, to restore order, peace and observance of the law . . . and the King is certain, before long, to have the nation on his side.

“ But it is necessary to continue to be gracious, that their Majesties should show themselves, should mix with the people.

“ The persons to whom the Queen is good enough to accord her confidence have undertaken to ensure the welfare of their country by ensuring the establishment of Royalty : their every effort will keep this object in view.

Whether they stay here, or whether some of them withdraw for a time, their paths will join for the same goal, and as long as the Queen may place her trust in them they will not cease to correspond with her."

Indignant at the notion that anyone should have thought her afraid, the Queen replies :

" No. 16, 15th Sept.

" It is true that the King had given orders to keep the doors of the Tuileries closed until his return. I believe that it was done purely from kindness to the Ministers, who desired it so as to be able to go by that way. I am not sure about this, and as I was told nothing about it, I made use of that way myself. I am far from confusing the Assembly with certain individuals who think to hurt us by putting everything in the wrong light. But they do not know that this pettiness lends fresh temper to noble natures.

" I certainly noticed the way the Assembly took the King's action. It is indeed time that order and peace came once more. I never cease pressing the point that these early moments should not be lost, that one should resume the strength that the law now gives, to forward and assure order. This, as I conceive, is the only way to regain tranquillity. But the recent elections¹ in Paris and in the country do not seem to augur it.

" Touching our personal behaviour towards the people, we ask no better than to do anything which can draw them to us, with a kindness and dignity that shall guarantee our sincerity ; that they can no longer say we do it the better to deceive them.

" I always count on my correspondents' zeal to be fully warned of what they may think necessary. I reserve to myself the right to comment thereon with equal sincerity.

¹ Elections for the Legislative Assembly.

“ Acting on their advice we propose going to the play next week. It seems better, so it appears to us, to go on our own initiative than to wait to be asked. . . . I must stop ; I am interrupted. . . .”

However, in the evening of that very day the fête took place in celebration of the King's acceptance of the new Constitution. Ruggieri the elder gave a splendid display of fireworks on the Place de l'Étoile. The King and Queen were present. While driving back in an open carriage, on their way to the Tuileries, down the Champs Élysées all lighted up with coloured lamps, they were cheered all the way. The Queen's counsellors conclude that the King and his people are reconciled, and that henceforth all difficulties will be smoothed away.

“ 18th September.

“ The King is re-established on his throne. The most difficult, most critical, one may say even the most painful circumstances are past. It is now our concern to give to this existence, to this power we possess supported by the law, the consistency that it should possess, and that the peace and liberty of the nation demand. The means to this end are undoubted ; their putting in practice holds nothing that is disagreeable, and the success of a determined line of conduct will serve day by day to encourage and sustain that determined resolution of which the Queen has already shown proof.

“ In the actual condition of things, when the nation is in a state of agitation, when people's minds have as yet no settled direction, when opposing interests are seeking, under the new order of things, their rightful place and their rallying-point, it is easy to master these open dispositions, to make them one's own, to turn them in the direction one wants.

“ At the moment one must consider masses rather than

individuals, guess the mind of the different classes of the nation, and draw them to oneself. With the help of things in general one must induce an affection for the power of the throne, and by more intimate and individual means induce an affection for the persons of the King and Queen. When we have got thus far, the growth of action and power, which tally with the interest of the public, will soon be obtained. The interval from then to now may be difficult, but it will be short, and if the King carries himself well, his Kingship and Sovereignty will not be affected in the opinion of the public. The Ministers and the Assembly will alone suffer the inseparable disagreeables of these early difficulties.

“The methods of gaining over public opinion ought not, as the Queen has thoroughly grasped, to be precipitate nor strained. Confidence will be established by continuity, by good bearing. What we want to make is an impression which will deepen as it goes on, and not a momentary enthusiasm which, just for the very reason that it had begun by being excessive, could do no other than decrease.

“The King would thus, from the outset, have two natural and powerful ways of influencing the most important party in the nation, that of the landowners and men of enlightenment, whose interest lies in order, public prosperity and peaceful and ordered freedom. The first of these means is the King’s proclamation, which should immediately follow on the promulgation of the Constitution. The second is the opening speech which the King will make at the next Assembly. This speech, in which he could incorporate not only feelings but facts, views of real and general efficacy, would give the Royal authority its true character in the Constitution and would make a deep and lasting impression on people’s minds; it would help to keep the Legislature on the right track, and would put the King outside all the errors the former might commit.

“Although the same means may influence the less educated masses, it will be necessary to use other methods; and as the King’s establishment is not yet fixed, it ought not to be difficult to distribute charitable aid during the winter and from now on, if a simple and natural way offers itself.

“The choice of the King’s guard, if well made, will make a large part of Paris his adherents.

“It is important to take an interest in the arts; their trend is necessarily monarchical; their influence conduces to peace. The attachment of those who practise the arts and the homage paid by their talent, influences public opinion. Every opportunity should be seized to give work and encouragement to artists of all kinds, and to writers; and to seek to attach them to oneself.

“At this moment the aristocracy seems to be bitterly estranged from the King and Queen, and at the moment this is not a bad thing, for it will bring round the public all the quicker. But these same aristocrats, or at least some of them, will come back separately, and that is also to the good, for it is desirable that they should take sides for the King, and so become a centre of the general reconciliation which will, little by little, be effected.

“The behaviour of the King and Queen in this respect, then, should be such as to give them no hope of change of resolution—a thing henceforth impossible—but to do nothing to repulse them, or of which they could legitimately complain.

“In the carrying out of this system it is extremely important to give a marked and benevolent welcome to such as, having been attached to the Constitution, have rallied to the King and Queen as soon as they adopted it. The Queen has done very wisely in taking up her box again at different playhouses. It is to be desired that she should use them as much as possible. She would do well

to go to the Opera on Tuesday. It is necessary that the Queen should surround herself with a certain number of women attached to her service, the choice of whom will contribute to inspire confidence, and that some of these who have fortune and personal recommendations should not be selected from amongst those who have formerly been at Court. The choice is important, and it is a matter that presses, for, independently of that confidence which is determined in great measure by the character of those who surround one, it is necessary to encourage the desire to be admitted to the Queen's circle, which will lead to the making of a brilliant Court, that necessary attribute of Royalty.

“Although the appearance of certain persons elected for the next Assembly seems to be of ill-omen, everything on the other hand points to the probability that the great majority will be well behaved. We shall have several influential friends there; various deputations which have arrived in Paris have already deliberately resolved not to go to any Club. In fact, we may so conduct matters that this Assembly will be held within bounds, its greatest mistakes curtailed, and that others, should they injure public interest, will but lead more quickly to the feeling that the need for action is imperative.

“It is impossible at this time of day to express all the ideas that the condition of things gives rise to; we will return to it in another letter and go into further details.

“From the moment that the drawbacks attendant on authority are withdrawn, and expressions of respect and zeal have produced forgetfulness of what preceded them, and when we have been enabled to give the King and Queen a surrounding of a kind to please them, and restore to their personal lives some of the things which may make for happiness, then the activity of thought, the line of conduct necessarily to be followed, the contrivances by which one

draws to oneself the affection of a great people by working for its happiness—all these may agreeably occupy the Queen.

“Whom nature has endowed with the courage to undertake difficult enterprises and pursue them with constancy, and the means for the seduction which help so much to success, is not insensible to success when it comes. It is a sweet and flattering victory to arrive at being an object of adoration to a great people, after very different experiences. The time when one is occupied with these things, when one sees each day change and accentuate a success in which no one would have believed, when in working out one’s own fate one is working for the happiness of France—the peace of Europe—that time is not the period of life when enjoyment is at its rarest and existence the least happy.”

Whatever she may think of the brilliant perspective unveiled to her by her counsellors, Marie Antoinette does all she can to help them to realise it. She keeps her promise to show herself in public. She appears at the Comédie, then at the Opera, in the Royal box. She is received well everywhere. But the presence of the King and the Queen at the theatre gives birth to demonstration on the part of the Royalists that compromises them in face of the Constitutionalists, and awakens in the counsellors themselves the fear that the old party at Court will succeed in leading them astray, to committing acts which will make this acceptance of the Constitution doubtful, and all its consequences.

The Queen writes on the 19th September :

“No. 17.

“We are going to the Opera to-morrow, occupying the big boxes. We have found that better for being seen by the whole house. We have every ground to be satisfied

in falling in with your wishes last night (in going to the Comédie).

“ I quite agree that the King’s speech at the opening of the new Legislature is of great importance. I desire these gentlemen to send in their ideas as soon as possible, so we may determine our own, and not to oblige us as before to hurry at the last moment.”

“ These gentlemen ” hastened to send her their ideas for the speech, but profit by the occasion to put her on her guard against the working of a “ mistaken zeal.”

“ No. 17, 20th September.

“ We send the Queen our ideas on the King’s speech for the approaching meeting of the Legislature, early enough for the King to have full time to examine and ponder it. Public opinion is kind and the progress of the movement in the King’s favour is what it ought to be. But it is needful that the distrust which it is sought to excite and which would destroy everything if it got a footing, should not be built on specious but plausible arguments. All that is done, all that is written on behalf of the constitutional King, serves to strengthen the roots of his existence ; but all that might be done, said or written for him in a sense contrary to the Constitution, could only be harmful to him. So it is not by momentary enthusiasm but by real and profound confidence that he will gain authority.

“ The movements of mistaken zeal, or of bad intention under the appearance of zeal, might stir up, and serve as a text to, different factions for imputing to the King secret views contrary to views generally expressed.

“ Should this opinion take root we should soon find ourselves on the defensive ; whereas by a good line of conduct we should advance in public favour, and far from the sovereign power arousing fear, public desire would

endeavour to give it the degree of strength necessary to the successful working of the Government.

“One can imagine it will be difficult to avoid the mistakes that false or clumsy friends may make in this line. But at least we must try to mitigate them. Yesterday, for instance, it was quite unsuitable that *Richard Cœur de Lion* was given at the *Italiens*. There was talk that would not have arisen over another play. The Republicans had the worst of it, but as they were on safe ground, they ended by being the stronger and by winning over the Moderates.

“Should any more discussion of this kind occur, the Queen would do well if she would have those who arrange the programmes of each performance brought to her, and tell them that, since the King has accepted the Constitution, far from pleasing him they only displease him by giving pieces that lend themselves to a contrary opinion. It is to be wished that the Queen should take the step without delay, for it is possible that many performances may go on in the same way, that the public may grow vexed, and that when this step is ultimately taken, it will look as if it had been dictated by necessity.

“At the same time that ostensible things are done in accordance with the public view, it is urgent to show that the resolution taken was a serious one ; consequently, to try and show it in the acts of the Government.

“It would be well if the King wrote a circular letter to the general officers commanding the troops of the line, and if he added something individually for MM. de Rochambeau and Luckner. A letter, quite short and simple, in which the King, in announcing his intentions, should dissipate the mistrust that divides the different classes in the army, and call them sharply to order and discipline. This would not only contribute to the recruiting for the army, to preserving its officers, and prevent

many from going to their ruin, but would also clearly prove to the nation that the King does not content himself with promises alone, but wishes to devote the power which the Constitution has put into his hands to being generally useful. The army is one of the principal supports of monarchical government. It is necessary that the King should, from the moment he takes up the reins of government, prove that his attention is given to it, and remind it that the Constitution places it under his immediate power.

“Should the King adopt this view we will concert with M. Duportail¹ the draft of the letter he might lay before the King.

“We may find that there are a mass of things to be done, but it is an important and decisive epoch; we must get things on a footing, and it must be done before the new Assembly takes its place.

“When what befits the present moment is carried out, when the first impulsion is given, results will be born of themselves, and to maintain them will cost scarcely any effort.”

Nevertheless, the Constituent Assembly, as soon as the Constitution had been accepted and sworn by the King, had decreed the abolition of all procedure relative to the Revolution and to the departure of the King. One talked no longer of “the flight to Varennes,” but of “the King’s journey.” All those who took part in it are cleared by the same decree.

Marie Antoinette is pleased; she is more than ever ready to take the advice given her in everything. She writes :

“*No. 18, 25th September.*

“I did not think it necessary to put in the paper what I

¹ General Duportail, Minister of War.

told M. de Laporte to say concerning the plays at the theatre : it would have seemed to give too much importance to the matter. But I did what was wanted of me, because I thought the observations made to me were right. It was necessary to stop the excess of mistaken zeal, but it was needless to advertise it in the press. Let these gentlemen trust me. I will do all that is needed in a suitable way. But the words ‘ plays ’ and ‘ Constitution ’ seem to me rather incongruous, and one cannot make the one depend on the other. It is not by such exaggeration that one best gains one’s ends.

“ I was well pleased with the success of yesterday’s deliberation. I grasped its full importance, and nothing escaped me in the matter of the proposal of a decree.¹ If M. de Mont[morin] does not soon submit to the King a letter for the princes, I should very much like to know what these gentlemen think about it.

“ I know how little time remains for all there is to do. It is to be hoped that if governmental matters come under discussion again, the Assembly will declare itself unmis-takably, so that the next Assembly, sitting as a simple, legislative Assembly and not Constituent, may not be able to assume the right of pronouncing on such a point. Let us have it very clearly defined that the King has every right recognised as his by the Constitution which he has accepted and promised to maintain.”

The Session of the Constituent Assembly was drawing to its close. The Queen’s counsellors could form no part of its successor, for decree forbade their re-election to the Legislature. But they meant to stay in Paris notwithstanding, and continue as the Queen’s advisers, to keep up their established relations with her, even if they

¹ The decree annulling the procedure relative to the Revolution and the King’s departure.

had to go away at times to their own districts to give an account of themselves to their electors, and keep in touch with them in view of future legislatures when they would not be bound by this unfortunate decree. Surely they had some right to be proud of the results obtained, and the Queen reason to be satisfied with their advice. The Constitution voted, passed, sanctioned, was solidly posited : a constitutional monarchy henceforth the established régime in France. The King was reconciled with his people ; injurious memories of his attempted flight, and of popular expressions of feeling, events which had sundered them, were now by common agreement vowed to oblivion. The decree of the Assembly concerning the Colonies had assured their conservation in spite of the opposition of the Jacobins, who had defended the right of rebellion, and in spite of the doctrinaires in the Assembly who had launched from the tribune the famous phrase : “ Perish the Colonies, but save the principle.” It was in some degree their work, and they were not backward in claiming the merit and in congratulating themselves and the Queen.

“ The march of events continues as happily as could be hoped, even better than one could have ventured to proclaim. Yesterday’s deliberation is a great gain for us : important for the King under its double bearing on the national interest which was in danger, and on the Royal prerogative which by the decree rendered has greatly gained in importance and influence.

“ The decree which ensures the conservation of the Colonies, possessions of the greatest worth, and one of the surest supports of the Monarchy, has not only dashed the hopes of the Republicans, but given the King still further means of defeating them by the influence that it gives him over commerce, whose relations with the Colonies, placed to some extent under the exclusive authority of the King,

are immense. It is needless to expatiate on the advantage of this decree. The future will show its full importance.

“We have discussed with the Ministers the conduct that the King should adopt towards the princes, and we have unanimously concluded that he must not wait until the present Assembly, or the following one, should have provoked a step which it is indispensable the King should make himself. We shall know this evening whether M. de Montmorin has suggested a letter on this subject. Should the Queen desire that we should have one sent to her we will busy ourselves about it. We have also thought about the nomination to the post of tutor.¹

“Our opinion has always been that it should be the King’s right to appoint to it. But as there is a decree, which in truth only relates to a provisional nomination, but which the next Assembly might take advantage of to claim for itself, we shall make it our business to get this matter definitely settled. It is generally wished in the Assembly that the King should close it in person, but as the ceremony in use on these occasions would certainly be followed by the legislative body, it is essential to fix it in advance in a suitable manner. This matter will also engage our attention. The Queen may judge how little time we have left at our disposal. The Assembly has but five days to run, and there are many important matters still to be done. That is what has prevented our working on the opening speech, but we promise it shall be ready in time for the King and Queen to examine it and make any observations they think fitting.

“The effect of to-night’s fête will be happy ; people are well disposed, and it will keep them so. But the Queen knows how easily opinion changes and how the ill-intentioned watch for an occasion to turn it against the King. We must turn their evil intentions aside ; we must put ourselves in

¹ To the Dauphin.

a position to resist should the next Legislature wish to exceed its legal limits. To do that we must avoid a false step.

“It would be useful if the Queen made known publicly her expressed intention that no plays should be given which can be twisted into a meaning contrary to the Constitution.

“The knowledge of this will encourage a more favourable disposition for to-morrow’s representation.”

CHAPTER IX

NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KING'S BROTHERS

THE attitude of the emigrant princes at the interview at Pillnitz (27th August 1791), their declaration that they had received on this occasion the promise of a coalition of the Powers in their favour, their letter, written collectively, to Louis XVI to advise him that the emigrants, with the help of the Powers, would come sword in hand and deliver him from the demagogues—all this stir from without against France and the Constitution she had endowed herself with, made it urgent that the King should take fresh steps in dealing with his brothers, and measures to stay the flow of emigration. The coming Assembly would not fail to deal with the emigrants: it was important that some categorical act of Government should head off the grave difficulties that might result.

“ No. 19, 28th Sept.

“ The public movements of the King and Queen have had the success we had the right to hope and had predicted. But the public waits, and with impatience, for the result of governmental action. They want to know the King's attitude with regard to his brothers. The departure of a great number of emigrants, and particularly of the body-guard, who cross the frontier, gives birth to anxieties; and this disquiet is sedulously exploited by such as have interest in maintaining trouble, and who fear lest the re-establishment of confidence may afford the King a

chance to halt the coming Assembly on the path they wish it to take. We must outplay these mischievous moves : circumstances are favourable, but no time must be lost. In revolution success follows only when each move is not only a good move but made at the right moment. The King must write to the princes, and lest this step be provoked by the Assembly, which would have a bad effect, it is essential that the Queen ask this very day the draft of the letter from M. de Montmorin. If the draft do not please the Queen, let her communicate it to us, and we will let her know what we think.

“ A matter that the King and Queen should most particularly keep in view to attend to, is the nomination of a Minister of Marine and a successor to M. de Montmorin, who seems decided to retire from his post. The public waits the choice of these appointments as a test of the King's veritable intentions, and ill-disposed people are so persuaded of the bearing they will have on public opinion, that they endeavour already to mislead it by spreading rumours that the King casts his eyes on men unfavourable to the Revolution. For some days past a particularly bad impression has been made on men's minds by the announcement that the King meant to give the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to M. Moustier. We do not suppose that there is the slightest foundation for this report, but we are bound to warn the Queen that it is nevertheless important to put an end to it, for it is of a nature to cause the very gravest uneasiness because of the known opinions of M. de Moustier. The ambassador in question is not without knowledge, but besides his personal character being in no way suited to the circumstances of the moment, his reputation relative to things as to-day established would put him in a position where he would be helpless for good, and make him gravely injurious to the King's interests. The surest means of allaying these false alarms is that the King should

lose no time in making his appointments. They are worth the ripest reflection, and it is important that they should go to capable men; but it is equally essential that these should be safe men, men to inspire confidence, for confidence, as we are always saying, in the circumstances where we stand, is the best way to govern, the only means of restoring to the Royal authority the consideration and influence that should belong to it.

"To-morrow's Assembly will hear matters dealing with the ceremonial. If that goes through, we shall proceed immediately with the King's speech for the Closure. It will probably be short, and will set up a useful distinction between the Constituent Assembly and the Legislative.

"The time necessarily taken by the new Assembly to verify its powers before voting itself into place, will give us time to prepare the opening speech: we will let the Queen have it in time to examine it and let us know her opinion."

Regarding the first point on which her counsellors insist, the Queen can give them satisfaction: the King will write an official letter (settled in converse with his Ministers) to his brothers, to ask them to cease stirring up the enemies of France and to come back to the kingdom. At the same time he will send M. de Goguelat to them on a confidential mission to remind them that he has already begged them to desist from their enterprise of counter-revolution and invasion of the land by strangers, and to put before them that their persistence in this undertaking exposes him and his to the greatest danger.

Marie Antoinette for her part writes to Fersen charging him to beg the King of Sweden to intervene with Louis XVI's brothers, to induce them to abandon their project to "save the King in spite of himself." Gustavus III was begged to make the princes understand "that they neither

could nor ought to act contrary to the orders and desires of their brother the King."

As for the second point, the nomination of M. de Moustier in succession to M. de Montmorin, who is anxious to retire, the unexpected insistence of her counsellors disquiets Marie Antoinette. Surely this is a new pretension, to want to control the choice which the King, according to the Constitution, has the right to make of his Ministers !

At any rate it is now too late. The King has already written to M. de Moustier to offer him the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. A short time ago, in 1790, Mirabeau had recommended this same Moustier to the King for the post. Circumstances then were such that Montmorin had to be preferred to him ; and Louis XVI sent Moustier as ambassador to Berlin. Now that the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs had again become vacant, owing to M. de Montmorin's insistence on leaving it in spite of the King's representations, Louis XVI had thought that M. de Moustier's nomination was indicated, and had written to him to this effect. How could he withdraw this offer ?

The position was delicate. Marie Antoinette hesitated for some time, but on reflection she made up her mind to give her counsellors the desired information. She writes on the 29th September :

"M. de Laporte read the draft of the proclamation¹ before the Council yesterday, and it will shortly be published.

"M. de Montmorin ought, I believe, to bring before the King this morning a draft of a letter to the princes. I shall try to see it. These gentlemen must have been told of the nomination of Monsieur Bertrand² for the Ministry

¹ On the subject of officers deserting the army for purpose of emigration.

² De Molleville.

of Marine, and it appears to me, according to what I have been told, that they have thought the choice a good one. I do not know him at all. What seems to me of supreme importance at the moment is to have Ministers who inspire confidence, but who at the same time can talk to and hold their own with the new Legislature, while upholding the King's legitimate rights.

"As regards M. de Moustier, I am surprised at the doubt thrown upon him since these gentlemen have been advised that the King had written to ask him to replace M. de Montmorin. The latter being gone, there is nothing to be done. It appears to me that M. de Moustier's views while he was here, and above all, since he has been in Berlin, ought not to inspire uneasiness.

"As for that, I have a thousand things to say about it as about other things, which it is impossible to write. For a long time past I have said we must meet."

But these gentlemen returned to the charge. In a second letter, written on the same day to the Queen, they lay stress on the dangers that the Marquis de Moustier's nomination affords.

"No. 19, 29 September.

"It is impossible not to return to the subject of the choice of M. de Moustier, if we do not want to ruin the King and M. de Moustier also.

"Had we been warned of this choice, we should have expressed ourselves earlier and with the same frankness. M. de Moustier is a determined and able man, whom it might be well to employ at another time, but his unyielding character is not suitable to the circumstances. His reputation as regards the Revolution is such, that the opinion arising from this choice would be that the King is trying to deceive the nation in those matters which are in his own hands, by contriving, in the choice of his Minister of Foreign

Affairs, means to arrange with the Powers projects absolutely contrary to outward showing.

"We need capable Ministers, but before all they must inspire confidence; right-minded men in the Assembly will join them in defending the Government. If they fail to inspire confidence, they will never, whatever character we may attribute to them, have the means even to ward off attacks made on them.

"It is extremely important that the King should wear his *Cordon Rouge* when he attends the Assembly. The effect will be good as regards the Assembly itself, as well as in the public eye, and beyond that it will have the advantage of pleasing the army, which will see with pleasure that its King wears a decoration particularly its own.

"It is possible, it is even necessary, if we do not want to be exposed to the most unfortunate consequences, to send a counter-order to M. de Moustier with great promptitude, with every mark of consideration from the King, which will announce his change of intention for the time being.

"We deserve all the more to be believed, in this particular circumstance, because far from being moved by an unkindly intention towards M. de Moustier, we have done business with him and look upon him as an able man whom it is well to keep in the public service; and when things are on a better footing, and time has lessened suspicions by lessening difference of opinion, he may be usefully employed in the most important functions."

Happily for Marie Antoinette the confliction of duty that seemed to lie before her disappeared almost as quickly as it arose. M. de Moustier refused the portfolio offered him.¹

¹ In the interview that the Queen's correspondents held with her on the 1st October, and of which we shall speak later, they had put forward M. de Saint Croix's name for this post.

The Queen writes :

“M. de Moustier has refused. We must therefore occupy ourselves with the nomination of someone else for the Foreign Office. Since our conversation, having spoken to the King and to M. de Saint Croix, we have discovered that beyond the short period of time that he has been in the diplomatic service and the small acquaintance he must necessarily have in that line, there is a still greater drawback, namely, his family, and I regret not having objected to this from the first. Having M. de Talon for brother-in-law, and M. de Saint Croix for uncle, he is unsuitable. No one is situated better than ourselves to judge of that. We must not therefore think of him any further for the post. M. de Montmorin has not yet given the King a draft for the letter to the princes. As no doubt it is a matter of urgency to write to them without delay, I request these gentlemen to send me their ideas promptly.

“I was just going to write when I received this morning’s post. M. Duportail¹ yesterday gave the Council a draft for a letter from the King to the army, which I have not seen, but from what I have heard, is neither fitting nor politic. Should one speak to officers, and threaten, as if they were criminals? That will not prevent a single one from leaving. On the contrary, they will feel, so to speak, under an obligation to go. Using this tone to them is to encourage insolence among the soldiers, and the lives of the officers will be still more endangered. Why not speak to them in the language they alone understand, by appealing to their attachment to the King, and the good of the service? Would that displease the new legislators? But

¹ General Duportail, Minister of War, had just issued his orders for the day to the army, authorising the members of the army to take part in the political debate at the Clubs. Owing to that, indiscipline, which was rife in the army, had increased, the soldiers calling the officers aristocrats, and refusing to obey them.

if this be the only means of keeping back those who have not yet gone, and of avoiding the calamity of this loss to France, is it possible or right to hesitate? It is only the voice of honour that can appeal in this case.

"We have succeeded latterly in stopping various people of importance from going away—some officers, too, who had faith in me and whom I have been able to retain. But it is more difficult to recall those who have already left. Obligations, *esprit de corps* hold back even those who would be very glad to return. We shall do all we can always to press them to do so. They tell me there is fresh talk of this question of the Governor. I think that M. de Lameth told me that in the indictment the Assembly was deprived of interference in this matter. We must certainly make sure of that, it is an important point, and considering the way this Assembly opens, it is a serious matter not to yield to it in what does not concern it."

Thus the Queen is seriously concerned in following, and making the King follow, the advice given to her, meanwhile discussing and objecting, when by chance his opinion differs from that of her counsellors. Then in "the morning's post" of which the Queen speaks, and which was given to her at the time of her writing, and which bears the same number and the same date as her letter, "these gentlemen" express their full approval and satisfaction. They continue to be full of optimism on the trend of affairs, and of satisfaction with the Queen's way of acting, and with the conduct of the King.

"No. 21, 10th Oct.

"Each day confirms the advantage of the plan that has been followed and the necessity of continuing it. The imprudence of the new Legislature has enhanced the impression made by the King's conduct; it has deepened and strengthened this impression. The deputies of the old

Assembly return home with the most favourable dispositions, and they will support the opinion that the departments will receive at the same time as all the inhabitants of Paris. So the Monarchy will be really established ; each day it will gain the respect, the confidence and the affection of the people. They are the real pillars of strength.

“The Republican party finds itself represented in such a degrading manner in the Assembly that soon the words ‘Republican’ and ‘Brigand’ will be synonymous in the language of the people. Thus the Constitution will show its real character much sooner than one would have believed. The majority in the Assembly will be forced by public opinion to side with the Government, and from outside, the aristocracy will alone form a veritable opposition. The aristocracy has been in all times the only powerful and redoubtable rival to the Kings of France. To-day she is the only enemy whom it is necessary to watch. The King and the people will always be one when they understand one another. If the King upholds and confirms this confidence of his people, soon the emigrants who to-day detest and decry them, will be reduced to give way and will seek to return to France. The foreign Powers who see the King rapidly regaining that favour, which is the mainspring of power, will no longer be able to think of opposing this natural and certain progress by outside undertakings that would entirely change the real trend of people’s minds, and that would become as dangerous for the King as embarrassing and alarming for the Powers who have been entangled by them.

“Should the Queen desire it there shall be sent to her in a few days a memorandum for her brother wherein all these truths will be demonstrated. But in any case they should always be the base of any correspondence that the Government carries on with foreign Courts.

“It is for this reason that the new Minister for this

department should be a man ready to follow and adopt in good faith the actual system of the Government—a system whose success is as certain as the fact that any other step would be dangerous and impolitic. The Queen cannot have lost sight of the observations made to her on this subject. The opinion is always the same. The same spirit, the same system, should animate the letter, clear, but moderate in tone, which the King should write to his brothers. We are ready to pass our ideas for this letter on to the Queen, but we should like to know beforehand if M. de Montmorin has not also sent a draft, and if so, we should like to see it.

“At the point reached in the matter of emigration of officers, the King's letter to the army can neither be too strong nor too prompt. Besides, the King's speech embodies in some way an engagement, and any delay would seem to favour defections.

“The Queen should not overlook any possible means of drawing towards her some of the emigrants and inducing them to return. All who return will help to swell her party, to sustain confidence, to excite gratitude in the people, discredit those who seek to make mischief, and divide that aristocratic power which is to-day the only power that is really dangerous for the King.

“The choice of the body-guard, the getting together of the civil side of the household, the work of providing good lodging for them, the employment of artists, should not be delayed: useful attachments will be made, proofs of good faith given, and the populace reconciled by these realities.

“All this we have said and re-said to satiety. But the point is, that in a system that is constant and to be counted on, what is true to-day will be true to-morrow and the day after. And so from day to day public opinion will be drawn more and more to one's side. By degrees, and

without offence to the Constitution, we shall arrive at the method of government which will best consolidate France, one whereby the King shall govern with the assent and under the reasonable and enlightened surveillance of the people's representatives, and wherein the public Will, once pronounced by their Assembly, find no further objection, obstacle or resistance. Without changing the Constitution in any particular, executive and administrative means can develop and grow stronger by simple legislative dispositions. The new order of things cannot come to perfection except under an instructed Legislature, and under Ministers whom time and experience have made acquainted with the true springs of the Government which is ours. But now and henceforward we shall avoid the evils which may result from the first false steps.

"All the advantages of such a course, and the certain ruin entailed on any other, cannot be set out in a letter, whatever its length. If the Government regains strength, and great strength, and France sees a new prosperity; if days serene and sunny follow quickly on these days of trouble; if without use of violent means, and by the single influence of a clever and sustained line of conduct, the Queen subjugates a people who have long treated her as an enemy; if, by the strength of that people she brings to her feet those who are to-day her avowed adversaries, what a career she will have run in the space of a few months! And yet, all that seemed doubtful has been accomplished; with a strong will and perseverance the chain of effects which has yet to run is as certain as the order of nature, the succession of day and night."

The Queen's counsellors then recommend M. de Ségur for the post of Foreign Affairs which will soon be vacant. Marie Antoinette does her part, and persuades M. de Ségur to take it.

She writes :

“ No. 25, Friday, 11.30 in the morning.

“ M. de Ségur has just left me. We have had a long conversation. He accepts ; and I think we need but congratulate ourselves on the choice. It is very essential that the King's Ministers, while observing the exact bounds assigned to their post by the Constitution, should lose nothing of their prestige, and above all, find occasion to make profit out of every fault and folly of this Assembly, in order to furnish the Government with means to get matters in hand and regain its strength. It is the only way to restore calm and confidence. I know well enough that it will take time, but we must not cease to think about it, that little by little we may gain our end.

“ M. de Montmorin has no thought of remaining on the Council. As I wished you, gentlemen, to have this at once I have no time to go into details. I will merely emphasise that the secrecy of this correspondence be guarded more carefully than ever. It is the only way by which either side can be of any use.”

Her correspondents hasten to give her the most formal assurances on this point.

“ The secret of the Queen's correspondence has been faithfully kept and will continue to be. The Queen can count on us, in this matter, with as much security as on herself. But M. de Ségur can do no good and will have no credit on the Council without the King shows him marks of great confidence, and it is necessary to that end, supposing that we are to give our opinion on an act of Government, that he should be able, *after laying it before the Queen by letter*, to transmit it openly to the King and Council by some such man as M. de Ségur.

“ We receive good news daily of the opinion reigning

in the departments; it is thought that the Assembly should keep within the limits of its powers; confidence turns to the King. The Queen is very well considered, for her resolution and her efforts are widely known. The same couriers, however, inform us that the last proclamations are judged weak, and of doubtful goodwill. We must take the first opportunity to remove this reproach. It is to be wished that the Queen should continue to show herself at the play. Madame de Lamballe's return is the more urgent, since that, being a personal friend of the Queen's, it would seem to give a lead to others who ought to come back. We will say no more about a certain name among those chosen for the guard. The thing is done, but we must lessen the attendant drawbacks by the choice succeeding. Anything that gives confidence or weakens it cannot be a matter of indifference, for, it must not be forgotten, confidence is the base we work on. Before our departure the Queen shall receive a letter setting out at greater length the aspects which now seem likely to impose the direction of her course of conduct, and of the King's."¹

But M. de Ségur, who had accepted the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, reconsidered it in view of the reception his name met with in the Assembly. The Queen writes :

“ No. 26, Monday,
9 o'clock in the morning.

“ I have this instant received a letter from M. de Ségur absolutely refusing office. After what passed yesterday in the Assembly, I cannot but grant him reason, and whatever wish I may have to see him in this office, I do not know what to say to him to make him stay. It is certain that if those persons who have the will and the means so to do, do not get control of this Assembly, very soon neither

¹ Barnave was already talking of leaving for Grenoble, his native town, to render account of his mandate and nurse his constituency.

Ministers nor King will be able to do anything. These gentlemen, if they would do the right thing, must seriously concern themselves in this matter. As for M. de Ségur, it is to be wished that these gentlemen should see what can be done. He advises us that he is leaving for the country at once. I cannot go into further details now because time presses in the matter. I will write more fully in a day or two."

This time it is Barnave alone who replies. The question is too urgent to give him time for consultation. He writes the same day in the forenoon :

"I have had a note from M. de Ségur to-day announcing his refusal of office and his departure for the country. I am writing to him now, and very stiffly, to dissuade him. If he has not gone we must try and overcome his resolution. If he be gone, as I think he is, we must wait some days before we can judge of the effect produced on the Assembly and the public by such repeated and cruel lessons.

"The more important circumstance is the disaster in the Colonies, if the misfortune be such as to be irreparable. For the rest, the graver the faults the quicker they will come to a head, and the sooner will the inept majority in the Assembly be forced to declare itself, and the sooner the need be felt of a strong Government.

"But in those circumstances, not a day, not an hour, must be lost, to gain popularity. As soon as corn becomes dear and the first cold sets in, there must be abundant charitable distribution, but done with discretion and through the municipality.

"The Queen will not have forgotten that in our opinion the path of Government, and the personal course of the King and Queen, are two different things. Each must be pursued as well as possible ; but when the steps of the Government falter it is more than ever important that the

personal side should hold good, that it may not be charged with the shortcomings of the Government."

At the moment the whole Ministry looks to Barnave for counsel. The King applies to him, the Queen being his intermediary, to know what line to follow in the new situation created by the Assembly's latest decree, condemning to death all emigrants who should not have returned by the 1st of January following: can he be asked to sanction a decree which condemns his own brothers to death?

Barnave replies:

"Thursday, 1 o'clock in the afternoon.

"The line to take relative to the last decree of the Assembly is clear, and assured of success if fully and promptly followed.

"I believe that the King cannot sanction a law condemning to death his own brothers and a multitude of citizens and former public officers who should not be back in the kingdom by the 1st of January, without giving all Europe the most unfavourable of opinions, the opinion that he is not free, an opinion which would dishonour him, for he has signed with his own hand a large number of acts attesting his freedom, and confirmed that liberty by taking various steps on his own initiative.

"Moreover, I hold the sanctioning and execution of this law injurious to State interests. Its only effect will be to draw together the emigrants and the emigrant princes, and to procure them that succour that they have lacked till now to enable them to effect anything against France. But it is impossible to refuse sanction unless at the same time one takes very decided measures. It is necessary then: firstly, that the moment the refusal is notified, the Chancellor should speak, and should say that the King could have adopted various dispositions of the decree, but that the sanction being indivisible, he

could only sign it as a whole ; that he will take strong measures against the emigrants and the princes, to induce them to return, and make strong representations to the Powers that they should cease all gathering of forces on the frontiers ; that if these steps should fail in a short time to effect what he hopes, he will welcome such administrative measures as may be indispensable ; secondly, that, some hours later, the Ministry should communicate to the Assembly a new proclamation to the emigrants, very strong in tone, and categorical ; a letter from the King to his brothers, terminating in orders ; a reasoned request to frontier Powers and notably to the Emperor, not to allow on their territories any gathering or arming of Frenchmen ; and, thirdly, orders given to the Ministers of War and Marine for the strict execution of former decrees relating to desertion.

“ Twenty-four hours later a circular from the Minister of Interior to the Administrative Assembly inviting them to indicate to the King lists for the formation of part of his guard : same letter to the Paris guard.

“ Finally, the formation of the Ministry, wherein, in my opinion, Foreign Affairs should be given to M. de Lessart, whereto he seems to be called by a requisition he has signed.

“ The War Office to M. de Narbonne, in the case of M. Duportail's retirement, and the Interior to M. Garnier, administrator of the Department of Paris, a choice as good as any other, and one which would be very popular.

“ And following that certain changes in the Constitutional direction, such as the advancements of Messieurs Bartheau, Caillave, etc.

“ If these measures be accepted as a whole, without restriction or delay, I will answer for the result.

“ The King's power will be strengthened, and he will gain in consideration ; the Moderate party in the As-

sembly will take courage again, and we shall have turned a critical corner to the advantage of public order and the Government.

“But if any of these steps which should accompany and follow on the refusal of the Sanction be omitted, the effect will be spoilt, and the Government fall under suspicion and ill-will, authority will wane from day to day, and it will perish owing to its own mistakes.

“I will try to see some of the Ministers and put them into the same way of thinking, and engage them to ask the King to grant an extraordinary Council to-night in which they may be proposed.

“The notion of walking in the Tuileries appears to me admirable, and simple of performance. No occasion, moreover, should be missed of speaking out in course of conversation. If the plan proposed in this letter be adopted, no means at disposal should be neglected that may engage some of the emigrants to return.”

This important Council was held the same evening, and the next day the Queen writes to Barnave :

“The Ministers will have spoken with M. Barnave of the Conference they held yesterday with the King. We were led to hope that M. Barnave would communicate his ideas to them to-day. The reflections sent one yesterday were very just, and I repeated them. But we must beware of lending too rigid and absolute a tone to the King’s words to the emigrants, lest they should not obey. The drawback would be twofold. The people would be told that the King held public language of this kind, but used another in his private communications, encouraging resistance without ; and the King would be made responsible for the non-execution of his orders and for all the severities eventually adopted. The worst is to be feared from such an Assembly, and from a Ministry that

never knows how to take an advantage. The nomination of the *procureur-syndic* is, to me, a proof that the Republican party gains in power.

“I put off until another moment any reply as to Ministers and the King’s guard.”

CHAPTER X

SECRET INTERVIEWS WITH THE QUEEN

WE have seen that Marie Antoinette had more than once expressed the wish to see those who were counselling her, and talk with them, a conversation being more helpful than letters. On their side, "*ces messieurs*" desired to converse with her. The difficulty was to find a means of meeting without drawing attention. The deputies were fearful of compromising themselves and of losing credit in the Assembly should it be known that they saw the Queen in secret and directed the Court policy.

But the Constituent Assembly, having finished its labours and pronounced its own dissolution, the 30th September 1791, a meeting was fixed. The interview was to take place the day after the Assembly rose, the 1st October, in the Queen's cabinet, whither these gentlemen would be introduced by an agent.

At the appointed time, half-past seven in the evening, Marie Antoinette retired to her cabinet, arranged that she should be alone, and waited. But no one came. After three-quarters of an hour's wait, she lost patience, and scribbled on a scrap of paper the following note to Agent 1 : o, the customary bearer of her letters to "*ces messieurs*."

" 1st October.

"I had decided at last to see these gentlemen. A day was fixed, Saturday Oct. 1st, at half-past seven

in the evening. It was A. L.¹ and B.² who were to come.

“After waiting three-quarters of an hour at the door, J. came and told me they had been stopped on the way by one of their acquaintances, just as they were coming in; that these gentlemen, already very nervous of the number of people and of the light they found on the road, had fled, while J. was talking to them. It is this story which made me write this note.”

Then the agent himself rushes up to explain that these gentlemen had been afraid of being recognised by some of their friends in the court of the Tuileries, and had not dared to come in, knowing themselves to be watched. The Queen then adds the following postscript to her note that the agent is to give them :

“P.S.—The person you know of has this moment warned me of the mishap that has just occurred. Tomorrow is not possible, as there will be play. Monday I shall be at home after seven o'clock. I will try and find a safe way where, if possible, you will meet no one. B. and A. L. wanted to come in all the same. Duport³ was dead against it.”

The agent who brought this note brought back this letter that the *triumvirate* had already written.

“Saturday, 13th October.

“The mishap that we met with at the moment of our arrival before the Queen, and the great number of people we had already met in the courtyard of the Castle, all go to prove that it is impossible to try again, before finding a less dangerous method. Not only would our lives be

¹ Alexandre Lameth.

² Barnave.

³ André Duport, the third member of the *triumvirate*, who wanted to follow the other two at this meeting.

compromised, but in that moment we should cease to be useful, and the great number of enemies that we have already been obliged to make, restrained for the time by public opinion, would fall upon us very advantageously at the moment, when by surrounding our movements with mystery, we had given them the right to suspect us. The Queen must see in these fears of ours fresh proof of our frankness and of our zeal. It is a very hard and painful sacrifice for us to postpone the time for an interview, which could not but be extremely useful in confirming and upholding the successful direction that affairs have taken for some time past. But it is possible to compromise such important interests as these have come to be were this communication to be discovered and published. We must certainly wait until we have found means that will give likelihood of secrecy. The time at our disposal will allow us to write henceforth to the Queen more fully."

Not being Members of the Assembly any longer, as we have said, they would in future have more leisure to devote to their duties as counsellors to the Queen.

Marie Antoinette had sought, and thought she had found, means to assure secrecy at their interview. She writes :

" No. 20, 3rd October.

" I perfectly understand the reason given for putting off the interview. The inconvenience suffered the day before yesterday proves how unpleasant our position is on all sides.

" Nevertheless, I am very anxious that the moment I may talk with these gentlemen may not be too long postponed. It seems to me to be interesting to be able to talk without hesitation on many points. Without acting imprudently, I will concern myself with the means of assuring their arrival here, and that I, myself, shall not be

disturbed in my room without it appearing extraordinary to those who are about me. There is only one question in the mouth of the public, whether the King should attend the Assembly to-morrow. The King has heard nothing of it. No one has been to talk to him about it. It seems to me that what is said at this opening is of such importance that one must at least have time to think about it. These gentlemen have promised me their views on the subject ; I await them with impatience. I charge the bearer of this letter to explain the only method that I think practicable for their coming here, and I persist in saying, the sooner the better."

The answer, bearing also the No. 20, is given on the following day, the 4th October :

"Penetrated by the necessity that the King and Queen should have a strongly constructed plan of action, which consistently followed should assure success, we are not to be deterred by the inconveniences that the method still holds that is indicated for our reaching the Queen. The remarks on the 6th division on duty¹ to-day seem to us to be just. And we agree with the Queen that to-morrow may be more favourable. So at half-past seven we will be with the Queen with the person who has given us the note. We are working on the King's speech for the opening of the Assembly.²

"There seems to be every reason that the day to be indicated by the King should not be earlier than Friday or Saturday. We will put off what we have further to say on the various matters which must occupy us until the moment of the conversation which we hope to have with the Queen."

¹ This division in charge of the Tuileries was probably less to be depended on than the one to follow.

² Legislative.

The interview took place and was followed by many others. Barnave seems to have often even been interviewed alone, to judge by this note :

“I have not forgotten the Queen’s last words in our second conversation. I have all the more reason to have faith in them since all that has happened since denotes on the part of the Queen determined resolution. Also I am full of confidence in her courage and sincerity.

“The line of conduct that has been followed since the acceptance has already spared France much distress, much danger to the Monarchy ; if it is persistently followed, all obstacles will be triumphantly overcome ; we shall meet with occasional storms, better times will come but slowly, but we shall reach them with a sure step, founded on the confidence of the people. . . .”

From this time on, from behind the scenes, Barnave and Alexandre Lameth, helped by Adrien Duport, directed the Ministry of the Girondins, called the Ministry of the Feuillants.

A few days after the first interview with Marie Antoinette, Louis XVI attended the Legislative Assembly, where he declared “that between the Legislative Body and the King must reign constant harmony and unalterable confidence.” The whole house applauded, and cries of “Long live the King” resounded. The speech was prompted by Barnave. The Queen continued to adopt his opinions and to make the King adopt them.

Fersen, who at Aix-la-Chapelle is working for the Congress and the Coalition of the Powers against Revolution, can make nothing of it. He writes to the Queen on 10th October :

“Do you seriously think of taking part in the Revolution, and do you believe there is no other way ? In fine,

do you want to be helped, or do you wish all negotiations with other Courts to cease ? ”

And in answer to the reply that she follows the advice of those who are in the way of helping her to bring back peace and order, he writes on 13th October :

“ Do not let your heart go out to fanatics. They are scoundrels who will never do anything for you : you must make use of them and mistrust them.”

In her secret mind the Queen was perhaps not far from being of this opinion, but she knew that without their help the Monarchy would be lost and war a certainty. If, to avert such a catastrophe, it was enough for her to run with the hounds, why should she not do so ?

It is her own interest, and the interest of the King, as well as that of France, that she must consider. She writes to Fersen on 19th October :

“ Be reassured. I am not carried away by fanatics, and if I find myself in treaty with some of them it is only to make use of them.”

Interviews being both dangerous and difficult, they could not be very frequent. So the correspondence continues as actively as in the past. On 13th October the Queen writes to her advisers :

“ According to the conversation I had with you yesterday, of which a part touched on the dangers of emigration, how necessary it was that if something had to be done about it, necessary steps should be taken by the King and not by the Assembly, we had both thought (the King and I) that a proclamation could not but be helpful to enlighten all French people on the King's real intentions. The one I send you a copy of herewith seems to me very good, all the more because it is in exact tone with the letter to the princes that was read to me and left to us yesterday.

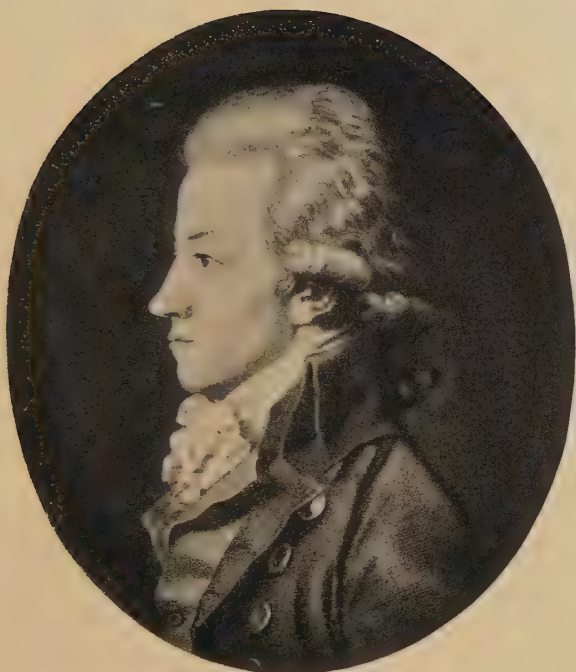
One might even add a word at the end of this proclamation to report that the King has written to his brothers, the Princes, without, however, making this correspondence public, which would be neither fitting nor decent. The King will mention this project to his Ministers this evening, at the Council meeting. Perhaps the latter will talk of it to these gentlemen ; but I have always wanted them to have this paper as soon as possible, so that should they have any observations to make to me I should receive them in time to review them. I think this is the way to take. It must be taken promptly, for as I am always saying, one must claim the merit of what one does as regards the public, and not yield to the suggestion that it was imposed on one, or let oneself be forestalled by the Assembly. I think that if we decide on this step we must prevent it being known beforehand ; and the Council, once posted, the secret will be difficult to keep. I therefore beg these gentlemen to send me back the paper with their comments to-morrow if possible.

“ I am also awaiting the papers that M. B(arnave) promised me before his departure, and I hope that during his absence he will not forget the end of our conversation. No mistrust can live between us.”

But Barnave has not gone, at least his departure is again postponed, and the Queen’s counsellors continue to act in unison and to write collectively. They are charmed with the plan of which the Queen spoke, and write in answer :

“ *No. 22, 14th October.*

“ The proclamation is well conceived ; in expression it is noble and plain, and in tone perfectly appropriate to the circumstances. It will have great effect. The Queen will see that the slight alterations we propose, have for object but to add to the paternal and sensible character of



A. P. J. M. BARNAVE

From the drawing by J. Guérin, engraved by Fiesinger

this document the serious and sustained note that befits a public and governmental act such as a proclamation. Some are indispensable, to lend a constitutional flavour to this act, which will be public and touches the sentiment and situation of those addressed.

“The feeling that has inspired the making of this document, and that has dictated it, will render peace to France, strengthen the Monarchy and assure to those who conceived it that deep and universal affection that is the solid base of authority, as it is the sweetest reward to those who exercise it.

“From the public and private conduct of the King, and by necessity itself which urges them on, it is likely that in a short time a large number of emigrants will return to France. How important it is, then, that this public benefit should be attributed to the King’s proclamation. It is therefore necessary it should appear as soon as possible.

“The Queen will receive in a very few days the papers that were mentioned in the last conversation. The last words cannot be forgotten.”

At last the proclamation is published, the letter to the princes sent. But the result is far from answering the hopes of the Queen’s counsellors. The princes refuse arrogantly to obey and to return, affirming that the King is not free, that far from betraying the good cause he is constrained by those who hold him prisoner in Paris to say the contrary of what he thinks. It is this, his secret thought, that his brothers will obey in treating all he does publicly as nothing worth. And the public in France, like the emigrants abroad, let themselves be persuaded on the one hand by the word of the Republican party, on the other by the leaders of the emigrant party, that the King is playing a double game; that while openly disavowing emigration and plans for European intervention, he encourages them

in secret. And emigration, instead of being arrested, redoubles, by reason of the popular fury this belief excites in Paris, and by reason of the attacks on the nobility and the pillage of houses which increase in the provinces. Furious at thus seeing their calculations upset, and their hopes deceived, the Queen's counsellors throw blame on her, pretending that enough notice had not been taken of the alterations and amendments on the draft of proclamation submitted to them. Particularly do they fall foul of M. de Montmorin, whom they accuse of despising their ideas and of acting with weakness and indecision.

It is impossible to judge to what extent their reproaches were well founded, as there is no document in the collection to indicate the tenor of the modifications which the projected proclamation had suffered—a proclamation which the Queen's counsellors had begun by finding excellent, declaring that its wording was “noble and simple, and its tone perfectly appropriate to the circumstances,” that its effect would be great, and that the sentiment which dictated it should restore “peace to France.” In what particular had the Act been changed in order to merit the disapproval now suddenly aroused in the Queen's counsellors on its publication? The letter they write the next day is a veritable indictment of her and of the King, of the Ministers and of M. de Montmorin above all. They accuse the King of giving way to secret influence, and the Ministers of entangling him in a path other than they had advised.

“*No. 22, 18th October.*”

“To-morrow we will write to the Queen at great length and very seriously. It is only too certain that at the present hour the King lends himself to counsels which are leading him to ruin. Before we withdraw we will speak the truth once and for all.

“M. de Montmorin, whose methods, understanding

and character are utterly unequal to circumstances, and who is himself led astray by vicious counsel, leads the King in a false path, lends him ambiguous utterance, hampers his acts with restrictions and reserves which have already shaken confidence and will soon destroy it altogether, and will end by leaving the King without credit or partisans and at the mercy of the different factions ready to unite against him.

“The event justified our promise: the future would have confirmed it, if only there had been the will to follow a clear and decisive method. Now, at the rate at which we are going, the future can only justify our predictions of evil. Circumstances are too powerful for us to think of overriding them, and of controlling public movements with a petty policy and uncertain leadership, without character or feature.

“When Revolution is toward, anything may be decisive. Government is no longer possible when acts emanating from the King personally tend to rob him of that imposing presentment of frankness and loyalty which is the basis of his dignity and power. If the King yields to the advice which has misled him for two years, the same causes will again produce the same effects.”

The Queen is indignant at these reproaches. The charge of being wanting in frankness and loyalty wounds her beyond everything, seeing she had done her utmost to follow the advice given to her, to make the King follow it, that every document has been submitted to the counsellors' approval and edited in concert with them.

She replies :

“*No. 23, 20th Oct.*

“From the beginning of my correspondence with these gentlemen I have been frankness itself. I am so in all things, for such is my character. It never varies. I

thought that in opening myself to three men of the same character some good might yet be done. In that intention I sacrificed all my prejudices, even the aversion such very action might inspire: and that with a single end—the King's welfare and that of his people. The two are too straitly bound in one ever to be separated.

“No regret, no afterthought followed my step. I saw it as a duty and that idea sufficed me. Also, it was the only way to take it. Had I seen a better one I should have adopted it with the same confidence, the same fidelity, for I do not understand half-hearted action.

“When it is one's nature to judge things in cold blood, nothing surprises one. I predicted to M. Barnave, in our last conversation together, part of what has just happened: that the princes and the *émigrés* would not obey us. That was bound to be. Regarding myself, I have nothing to reproach myself with, having used all the means I thought possible to bring about good. Since the King's acceptance, our way has been so clearly defined that its exact following is neither possible of mistake nor a proper subject of reproach. Nothing can be imputed to us.”

The reply from the Queen's counsellors to this letter is a plea in support of their accusations. In spite of its excessive length (sixteen pages of this same close and clear writing), I quote it nearly in its entirety, eliminating only those short passages that are only evident repetition of things already said.

“Oct. 19th.

“The proclamation, whose effect might have been very important, has only made a feeble and doubtful impression, because of the refusal to admit *the indispensable changes which gave it the constitutional tone and the firm and decided note that befits an act of this kind.*¹

¹ Underlined in the original.

“Nevertheless, in the edition submitted to the King, we always preserved his dignity, and we put exaggeration from us as a mistake in propriety and truth. But when one falls into the other extreme, when one loses one’s constitutional tone to take on an ambiguous one, one is liable to arouse mistrust, one damps one’s latest partisans, one calls resistance to life in giving it hope, one unconsciously draws near to a very grievous position—that position in which one successively loses the confidence of the whole world, and where one has no more friends.

“The letter to the commanders of the ports contains many phrases that are too guarded and that give the public the right to suspect plans of a contrary kind. The letter in which the King notifies his acceptance to the Estates of Holland, and which is to be found in the papers, contains a phrase that justifies all kind of distrust. These writings do not give that frank expression, that invariable wish to follow the way that has been adopted, that characterised the first steps taken by the King, and that brought him such success.

“How can the King speak with dignity and govern with severity within his kingdom when his foreign acts show doubtful resolution, and when, in the language in which he addresses those, who having left their country manifest openly their intention to wage war on it, there is not a single firm phrase? How shall he dare to exercise his right to refuse were it but one single decree of the Assembly if he does not possess the whole nation’s confidence; and how is he to obtain this confidence when, in the words that he addresses either to sailors leaving their posts, or other emigrants, to those who, in one word, we have the right to look upon as our enemies, it appears that only necessity keeps him with us while his heart is with them?

“Nevertheless, it remains certain that the King’s friends are here and his enemies without, that everything

is to be done by the confidence of the people, and that should it be lost not one single resource would remain. Every day these two years the work goes on of destroying the Monarchy by determinedly allying its cause with that of a party of malcontents. Should the same line of conduct be renewed, we shall see a return of the same misfortunes. But the weakest relapses are more dangerous than the most severe illnesses. The Monarchy cannot again be subjected to such trials. We must be resolved to follow, without interruption and undividedly, the system that has saved it before and will preserve it again—or, we must renounce the Monarchy altogether.

“Perhaps the Queen may find this language exaggerated, since it is only founded on certain acts that one can but call tinged with error. But these errors are serious because they offer the public a different system from that which first gained their confidence. The aristocrats profit by it to spread the report that the King is at the bottom of his heart on their side, and through that they win partisans and strengthen their resistance. The different factions also profit by it to make insinuations, to decry the Government, and recover their credit. There are no errors that are of no account when one is surrounded by enemies clever and unscrupulous enough to make use of them. Nevertheless, these deeds are of less importance in themselves than are the hidden feelings they indicate and the future they serve to predict. We are beginning again to walk uncertainly and irresolutely, suspicions will be raised, we shall lose all dignity, because that lies in strength of conduct and frankness of speech. We shall alienate the people while doing all we can to charm them, while we might have been their idol had we only troubled to reassure them. We shall not reconquer the opposing party, because it is only possible to regain them by imposing our will. Such serious circumstances cannot be dominated by feeble and uncertain

policy. When power needs to be regenerated by respect, faith and love, whatever clouds the face of things and leaves opinion doubtful, is but a slow poison that undermines and destroys it. In time of revolution men's minds are sensitive; frank and decided methods alone succeed: easy to discover, simple to put into action, but they need a firm will and that is what does not exist.

"The King will be ruined by M. de Montmorin; this Minister is not equal to circumstances, is incapable of judgment, being unable to see the means of success at his disposal, or the danger to which another line of conduct would expose him—and perhaps unable to consider the interests of the State, and of the King, independently of his own standpoint. At this moment he seems to be led by an American named *Maurice*, a man to whom nature has given, allied to a certain wit, a character and judgment the least fitted for the conduct of affairs, and who, moreover, is completely ignorant of the appropriate methods of governing the French nation and the French Constitution.

"By what extraordinary whim could M. de Montmorin, at the time when the upset was at its worst, order a letter so ridiculous by its exaggeration to be sent to the foreign Courts—how could he, to-day, when the King is so closely in touch with the Constitution, notify his acceptance in a style which expresses reserve and ulterior motives, rather than sincere decision? Why should he who was so weak and so disposed to yield in times when it was easy and natural to defend the ground he stood on, why does he seem to feed on regrets and to occupy himself with chimerical speculations to-day, when peace is made, and it is not a question of waging war again, but of cultivating and making the best of what one has?

"The ground of the Constitution is fecund, in truth it is not yet cleared, and that work has need of a cleverer and more able hand. But how can a Minister, who finds the

task above his strength,¹ think himself strong enough to fling himself unto unknown paths, with fresh adventures? He knows neither how to defend nor how to turn to account the power he has, and yet believes himself capable of conceiving plans and undertaking conquests. The fate of a great Empire cannot be conducted with such carelessness. We repeat, M. de Montmorin is ruining the King.

“Should the King and Queen feel too great a repugnance to the man we have suggested putting in his place, another must be sought, provided that he be a Constitutionalist. But we must consider, and stop the advance of evil before it grows worse. The King can only retain the confidence and authority of the National party by firm and consistent behaviour. If successive steps seem to speak of a contrary system, if he succeeds in being considered a secret adversary by the Constitutional party, formed by nearly the whole nation, and which asks but to honour him, to believe in him, there will be no further means left of defending him and of raising up the Monarchy a second time.

“The confidence that the King has rejected will turn towards the Assembly, and the anti-Royalist party will take the lead; they will plunge us into anarchy. And when the country is tired of these disorders, who will answer for it that the Revolution will not end in a mutual arrangement between the Republic and the Aristocracy, for every real aristocrat is a republican at the bottom of his heart, or perhaps in placing the Monarchy in other hands, for a change of dynasty is a common method in revolutions to regenerate power?

“Regarding ourselves, our views cannot reconcile themselves to half-measures and half-confidences. We have seen too well how this path can lead to degradation and destruction. It lies with us to put into all we do courage that stops at nothing, unchanging fidelity and

¹ M. de Montmorin, who asked permission to retire some time ago.

resolution. But it is impossible to launch oneself thus, if we do not start from a fixed point, and one on which one can count as on oneself. We do not seek to disguise that in such a situation we think it better that from this moment all correspondence with the Queen should cease, rather than wait for a period when this measure would be more painful. The Queen would not hold us in the estimation we deserve should she think that in ceasing to correspond with her we could change either our feelings or our principles. Ours are unchangeable. We have been able to side with the King without sacrificing our devotion to liberty, and we might find ourselves among the opposition without being less attached to the constitutional prerogatives of the King. Our friends in Parliament will follow the same path, and as they are among the most resolute and decided of their party, as everyone of worth is beginning to have a bond of sympathy with them, it is possible that should the Monarchy or the Constitution find itself exposed to real danger, they would prove their saviours yet. If in spite of the national inclination to trust to the King, and the universal movement of mind which would see the Revolution finished, and in spite of the weakness of a legislature which will have more and more need to lean on the King, they do not restore him the strength he stands to lose; if in the face of so many advantageous circumstances the King is led into mistakes which make plain to every man the danger we have foretold—well, we shall still be ready to use all means in the same direction, if good may yet be done, and we shall have proved once more that men of strong character only find themselves in the moment of peril.”

With a simple and noble greatness the Queen is content, in her reply, to mark what is false and controvertible in their attack.

“ 21st Oct.

“ I have never refused or feared to hear the truth. On the contrary, I have always welcomed such as sought to show it me. But when, according to a plan adopted by common accord, a course followed steadily on my part for four months past, these gentlemen come and tell me without any apparent motive and without my having once refused to follow their advice, that they prefer to withdraw themselves from me and from our concerns, when they speak to me of the uselessness of their continuing this correspondence, I own frankly that I cannot find in this step of theirs either that character for generosity which I flattered myself I could recognise in them, nor that will to serve the public good that I seemed to find. I will not dispute a possible truth in certain reflections laid before me in their long letter. But it is not a question of a single Minister, but of a whole Ministry unequal to its task. Have I not said it again and again ? By its littleness of mind, its narrowness of means, it is incapable of serving the King’s policy. It only thinks of maintaining itself, be it even to the detriment of affairs of State. It is not thus that a great kingdom is led, and particularly in such critical times as we are now traversing. Here is the result of that impolitic decree of the Assembly on the Ministry. There is very little justice in attributing its effects to a want of frankness in the King and in myself.”

Here the Queen’s correspondents could but agree, explaining at the same time that it is their devotion to her which moves them to emotion and forcible language. They reply the same day :

“ 21st Oct.

“ We have not suspected any lack of frankness in the Queen, nor that she was the cause of the trouble, for we have pointed out the author. If we have thought that

she shut her eyes to its importance and that she did not oppose it with sufficient energy, is not the latest proclamation a proof of it ?

“The King is being dragged on a course which will see him lost ; we are impotent to offer resistance ; can we remain impassive ? The Queen cannot consider too carefully the position she is in. If we showed ourselves too strongly moved, our interest in her had as much to say to it as our interest in the State itself. The King is being led into a series of false steps, and she will be the first to fall. The Queen mentioned M. de Ségur again in her last conversation. This notion must be followed up. M. de Ségur, whatever circumstances may have against him, is a man of spirit and will not accept the place if he does not mean to affirm himself. Then no fear but that the Government course will be clear and determined if the leadership be firm. As to our conduct, it is necessitated by the very reasons we developed yesterday. But our aim and our sentiments cannot change. The trust placed in us by the Queen imposes the duty of acquainting her with the truth.”

Truth ! Even as she had said, Marie Antoinette had no fear of hearing it. She had the intuition of it, and she felt that all her efforts to conciliate the contradictory influences struggling and surging about her, were far from their end, and that the situation was growing worse.

CHAPTER XI

RENEWAL OF RELATIONS AND FRESH DISAGREEMENTS

INDIGNANT and profoundly discouraged, as a result of these unjust recriminations on the part of her counsellors, Marie Antoinette let some time pass before writing.

It is Barnave who resumes the correspondence. He writes, under date 3rd November :

“ The time that has run by since the Queen’s last note has given birth to several incidents, without, however, necessitating any change in our own plan of action.

“ It grows more important and more pressing than ever that we should win popularity by external behaviour, and the public is beginning to say that the King has changed his mind and that he now repents of all he has done since his acceptance. How should the public not think this, while the two extreme factions do all they can to insinuate it, and the conduct of the King and Queen does not tend to destroy it ? The state of confusion that exists cannot continue. Opinion, struck by the mistakes committed every day, and by events which press on, will soon force a crisis, and will lead us towards methods of decisive and more regular government. But will this crisis be in the King’s favour or against him ? Will it grant him, with the majority of the Assembly, that growth of power that he can obtain without overriding the Constitution, or on the other hand will it grant this authority to the administrative bodies—to the various Committees of the Assembly ?

That is what will be settled by the trend of opinion, and that opinion can only be influenced by the degree of confidence and love which it depends on the King to draw to himself.

“The emigrants scarcely count at all. We must, by all means in our power, help to dissipate that subject of fear. When we are at peace as regards outward affairs, we shall be obliged to interest ourselves in interior matters, and there it is that the King has all the advantage.

“What M. de Montmorin has reported of the King’s instruction relating to Sweden has sufficed to arouse enthusiasm.¹

“The people want to side with the King, but he never sees them, he never hears them spoken of but by their enemies, he never remembers that they are there.

“M. de Luz, a very agreeable young man, known to the Queen and patriotic, wished to be employed in the body-guard. He has been to see M. de Brissac, who received him very cordially, but said he could do nothing in the matter without knowing the wishes of his family, and has virtually made him understand that he would do better at Coblenz. That is the story one is told! There are hundreds, and thousands, like that. Thus a monarchy may crumble, which might be sustained as easily with words and smiles, given a clear vision and such as no one could doubt.

“I have got the Colonists ² to present an address to the King, with which I have provided them—a thing that is known only to two of them, of whose discretion I am sure.

¹ Allusion to the advance made towards the King of Sweden by Fersen and Breteuil.

² The Colonists of Saint Dominique, against whom the negroes and mulattoes had risen. The massacres and destruction in the plantations perpetrated by the latter remained unpunished and brought about the loss of the Colony.

It is important that the Government should show great activity in this matter, not only for the Colonies and for commerce, but to remove suspicion, that might be aroused when the occurrence becomes known.

“For we may be uncertain as regards the nature of this evil, but we cannot doubt it is a very grave one.

“The arrival of Madame de Lamballe is a further reason to induce the Queen to go to the play. This must be before the news from the Colonies is confirmed. We must have the strength to push away the sadness that assails us. We must arm ourselves with courage to vanquish the first obstacles, to follow out the plan we have adopted, and to convince all those minds on whom our future depends.

“The old régime is at an end, the property of the priesthood is dispersed, the nobility annihilated, not by the decree of June 19th but by that of August 4th, and by its mad and ruinous crusade. The nation remains between the Republic and the King. For the King, is the wish of the people, the opinions of all sensible men, the Constitution, the natural march of events; against the King, the mistakes of the Government, and an unfortunate habit of languor, apathy and discouragement.”

There was neither languor nor apathy on the part of Marie Antoinette, but doubt and disillusion began to take possession of her. That melancholy she was told to fight against and that she could not succeed in conquering, was caused by the breaking up of her hopes of saving everything by conciliation and by the acceptance of the Constitution. She saw the Republican party gain in popularity and strength and grow more tyrannical and more arrogant from day to day. The people, worked upon by the sections, were heart and hand with the leaders of the Revolution, who ruled the situation and were masters of the street.

The Constitutionals grew weaker and weaker in the Assembly. Girondins, Jacobins and deputies of the centre seemed inclined to unite to crush the Constitutionals and destroy the Monarchy. From all sides efforts were being made to resume the revolutionary movement and to hasten its pace. All who longed for peace and order were treated as reactionaries and reduced to silence through fear.

And yet the King had conscientiously kept the pledges made while accepting the Constitution. Louis XVI had learnt the text of it by heart and applied himself to conform his conduct exactly to it, lending to his task all the minute care of his precise and meticulous character.

He did not seek to get back what it had taken from him, nor did he mean to yield one iota of what was left to him. He had chosen as Ministers men belonging to the left centre of the Assembly—that is, the Constitutionals. He had left them free to act according to their convictions and opinions. Marie Antoinette found them feeble and yielding for the work in hand, but they were men of the party and had to be accepted. And now her counsellors, Constitutionals from the first, accused them of want of skill, and found that the Constitutional Ministers of the King had drawn him into unconstitutional and reactionary measures. Above all, they overwhelmed poor M. de Montmorin—he who only asked to be allowed to leave—with bitter reproaches, pointing to him as the author of all the trouble.

Things had arrived at a point when neither the King nor his Ministers had great influence on the march of events. All power had passed into the hands of the municipalities and clubs. In Paris the Jacobins reigned, and the Mayor and the sections governed. The King was of no account ; his Ministers of very little.

Still, Marie Antoinette had come to understand that Montmorin must be removed from Foreign Affairs. Called

upon to render an account of the manner of reception accorded by the Powers to the communication of the King's acceptance of the Constitution, he had not had much to say, and his report was very ill received. He pressed for the acceptance of his resignation.

Marie Antoinette proposes to her counsellors to renew negotiations with M. de Ségur. But M. de Ségur persists in refusing. From another quarter, Madame de Staël intrigues to get M. de Narbonne the Ministry of War.

The Queen writes :

"No. 27, 4th November.

"The bearer will tell you all that has passed as to M. de Narbonne. It is clear that his attitude is the result of some intrigue, which M. de Narbonne himself may not suspect. Had he any pretensions beyond that he could not be pleased with me. I told him that, to speak frankly, the zeal and attachment he evinces would, to my thinking, be infinitely more serviceable in the post he now holds.¹

"I am very sensible of the necessity of appearing in public, even as you suggest. I try to find ways of doing so, and will take any and every occasion. But I am too shocked by these Colonial calamities to go to the play. I should not have the heart. Our presence there at such a moment would not be decent or proper.

"I will speak to M. de Brissac. He is a gentleman, and a man who is attached to us, but he has shown lack of intelligence and tact.

"I want a candidate for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The name of M. Orelli has occurred to me. I do not know him, but from what I hear he has the capacity desired, and nothing during the Revolution has marked him as one to be avoided."

¹ That of Major-General. The appointment was made by the Assembly, but he did not accept it until the King had accepted the Constitution.

Barnave replies :

“ This business of M. de Narbonne has been managed with an absurdity which is only explicable by the character of the person who chiefly sways him.¹ It seems that the Queen was told that he was sure of the Council, and the Council that he was sure of the Queen. The reason for this confidence was, I believe, a conversation in which the Queen showed some goodwill towards M. de Narbonne, and a secret notion which possesses the same person that anyone she has set her heart on must have his way. For all that, however little fitted M. de Narbonne may appear for the post he wishes, the Queen will see, no doubt, that this matter be managed in a manner not to disoblige him, and that we must, as far as possible, avoid causing resentment in his circle, which, a thing of small importance in other circumstances, might be mischievous at this critical time, when it is necessary to gain over whomsoever has a finger in the popular movement. The confidence he inspires in the Queen as the head of the public force is a favourable index for his transference to more important functions, when he may be less necessary to the post he fills to-day. Also it were well that the way he expresses himself on the Constitution, and on the King’s constitutional disposition, were generally known, and hundred-tongued Fame herself could not spread news quicker than the person from whom he seems to have no secrets. I must remind the Queen, before leaving this subject, that it is indispensable to keep to herself her sentiments regarding La Fayette. He is hated by that circle, and certain words spoken of him by the Queen to M. de Narbonne in her first conversation are ignored by none. M. de La Fayette is the only man in France who could get into the saddle and find himself at the head of a party against the King. I

¹ Madame de Staël.

think him far from doing such a thing, and I hope that by our various holds on him and particularly by the great ascendancy M. Duport has over him, we may always determine his conduct. Indeed, I ought to go and see him in his retreat in order to keep in touch with him. But nothing will influence him so powerfully as the dispositions shown by the Queen towards him; and it is the character of the man to be as easily led by trust placed in him as impossible to drive by any other consideration.

“As to the Minister’s successor, that, I think, may wait for a few days yet without inconvenience. All the information I have about M. de Barthélémy is favourable. I do not think that he has, like M. de Ségur, the advantage of being very well up in affairs, but he will be subject to fewer attacks and suspicions in his department. This choice, not being that of someone at Court, will be in the spirit of the Constitution, and I do not think it will do harm as regards the outside world. Nevertheless, to my thinking, everything seems to advise the holding over of this nomination for a few days. I have no opinion about M. Orelli. The confirmation of the news from the Colonies that arrived yesterday stops the play-going. We must find other means of showing ourselves. It is to be deplored that we missed the Exhibition of Pictures. We might visit the libraries, insignificant as it would be. For the matter of that, if the King has need of important occasions, the Queen, especially since Madame de Lamballe’s arrival, may take slighter ones. To appear in public is to appear frank; it draws all hearts to her. To remain hidden, seems to indicate a hidden sorrow, and encourages suspicion. It would be well that Madame de Lamballe should also show herself in public. If she is seen, her return will be an act of patriotism and a pledge of the Queen’s intentions. Should she remain shut up in the Tuileries the public will believe in a conspiracy.

“The Queen should take up the formation of the body-guard. Nothing could be more decisive. M. d’Ervilli (*sic*) has been named. He is a good soldier, I believe, but he has put Brittany against the King, and I have no leaning on either side to weigh against these two motives. In a year’s time we could have used him without any difficulty.

“I have an idea from which I see the Queen is not averse, and that is to ask each department for a certain number of subjects for non-commissioned officers and soldiers. And that the same application should be made to the battalions of the guard in Paris and to the various regiments of the army. I will soon send on to the Queen circular letters for the execution of this plan, which I think likely to produce a very good effect.

“M. de Lessart is to suggest to the King that he should write in his own hand to the King of Sweden to persuade him of the truth of his intentions, which he still persists in doubting. I think this a useful and even necessary step. The letter should be written in such fashion that should it become public, it should not be thought that the King had approved and upheld the moves made latterly by this prince. But we must leave no stone unturned to put an end to these annoyances from without; they are the stock food of suspicion, the grand resource of Republicans; they retard the advent of wiser and more moderate ideas.

“Employ every means to induce Monsieur to return, for, when two months¹ have elapsed, M. d’Artois steps into his place. He may be submitted to the same requirement, and soon there will be no intermediary between the King and Monseigneur d’Orleans, who is the legitimate successor to the Regency.

“This letter is so long that I shall put off many things

¹ The period that the decree of the Assembly gave to *Louis Stanislas* to return to France under pain of being deprived of his eventual right to the Regency.

less pressing to another day. I am busy tracing a general sketch of a governmental plan of action which I will send to the Queen."

Following the advice of her counsellors Marie Antoinette gave her charity to the poor of Paris through the hands of the municipality; but the election of Pétion as Mayor in succession to Bailly became, because of that, a cause of anxiety to her. In what spirit would her alms henceforth be distributed? Pétion she knew since the famous return from Varennes. He had not shown himself particularly hostile to her then; he was even, at the outset, more disposed than Barnave to enter into conversation, but all the Queen's efforts to win him over by kindness and graciousness were of no avail. No sooner back in Paris but Pétion showed himself an inveterate enemy to the King and Queen. In the Assembly he had insisted that Louis XVI should be tried on the act of his attempted escape. He had raised the question of his dethronement while proposing a regency which should be elective. His friendship for Madame de Genlis, whom he had recently accompanied to London, whither she was taking her pupil, Adélaïde d'Orléans, led people to believe that he had the candidature of the Duke of Orléans in view. Since then he had become a tribune of the people and shared the popular ovations with Robespierre.

The Queen knew that she had a personal enemy in him, and the Monarchy a bitter foe. His election, which was attributed to a manœuvre of de La Fayette's enemies for preventing the election of the latter, made the Queen anxious. She speaks her mind on it to her correspondents, who reply :

"No. 31, 17 November.

"The election of M. Pétion as Mayor is a grievous affair, but far from being as important as many people

would like to think. Before long the new Mayor will have fallen out with those who cry him up to-day, or he will go under himself in trying to uphold them. These absurd elections cause inevitable reaction with the public. These successes, gained by a small number of individuals against the tide, serve but to bring about a change more quickly. Every day exaggerated opinions lose partisans, and the longing for peace is felt more generally. Truth is more hard to attain about people than about things, but it is attained inevitably.

“These last few days have made a profound impression in the King’s favour. It must be sustained. It is certain that without all that has happened emigrants would have returned in large numbers. We must do all we can to encourage this and to uphold them in this design.

“If there was a possible means to get Monsieur to return, the victory of the monarchical principle would be assured, and the King would be the idol of the whole nation. It is impossible to delay any longer in appointing a Minister for Foreign Affairs. M. de Lessart seems to us decidedly the most suitable to occupy the post. The Assembly has great confidence in him, and he possesses the necessary qualities for this department and for the conduct of affairs outside these functions. He is used to the present working of the Government. No other man could offer the same advantages.

“The same reason holds good for M. Garnier at the Home Office. His political principles are good, he is very energetic, speaks with great ease, has a certain decisiveness in his character. He has been the people’s choice. There should be no hesitation about choosing him. But if we do not want the Assembly to send a deputation to the King to beg him to nominate a Minister for Foreign Affairs, it must be done within twenty-four hours.”

The King decides for M. de Lessart. He even makes

no delay about it. The very next day the Queen replies to Barnave :

"No. 32, 18th November.

"The King is on the point of deciding to nominate M. de Lessart for Foreign Affairs. M. Garnier is clever, they tell me, provided that he knows how to speak, and hold the interest of the Government. His decision of character will be of use.

"Notwithstanding the veto, the effect of the decree on the emigrants will be calamitous, so far as the hope of seeing them return here of their own accord. It will, I believe, even cause others to leave the country. I feel more than anyone how valuable Monsieur's return would be to us. But he has missed every occasion when it would have been possible, and I fear he will now be unable to manage it."

As to M. de La Fayette, the Queen fully agrees with Barnave in the sense of his preceding letters. She adds in a second little note written on the same day (18th November) :

"I still have to speak to you of La Fayette ; whatever weaknesses or other faults there may have been on his part, we ought, and we are decided to, uphold him with all the means at our disposal. It is clear that in his own interest even, he should use all the force that he has under his hand to maintain order and the safety of the Tuileries. Nothing will make us desert him ; he will have all our support. Should he gain additional strength therefrom, he will owe it to his adversaries."

At length the Queen's counsellors are pleased with her. They seem to want to rescind the severity of their judgment and to make amends for the reproaches they had addressed to her. The collective correspondence, interrupted since that moment, is taken up again.

“ 23rd November.

“ If the Queen has received nothing from us for several days, we have been none the less busy with what concerns her, and with all that might at the moment rouse her anxiety.

“ Complications abound ; circumstances are serious, but there is nothing to alarm the Royal house, if goodwill is brought to its defence. Affairs cannot move much longer in this direction. There will be a time when, necessarily, public opinion, awakened by the feeling of something amiss, will force it to alter ; and then the new way that we are to follow will be made clear to us by universal opinion. That opinion is now for order and peace, for the Monarchy and for the power of the Government ; it will need confirming and strengthening in that direction.

“ If, when the critical moment arrives, the King is enjoying the confidence and affection of the nation, every evil will be imputed to his enemies, the tide will turn towards the Monarchy.

“ If the King is ringed with suspicion, if his strength of will be doubted, and should his inertia be complained of, should he be forgotten in the depths of his palace, the reproach for all this will lie at the door of the executive power.

“ Already the position of affairs is beginning to arouse the attention of every thinking man. Most of them turn to us, and we shall know how to guide each one in a favourable sense. We shall use the most powerful methods so that public opinion should not go astray, and so that the crisis which certain perverse minds seek to envenom may be calamitous but for themselves.

“ We mean to gather towards the same goal the most influential men of the kingdom. We will inundate

France with pamphlets. We will, on the affair of the Colonies, make all the manufacturers and all the commerce of France speak in favour of the Government and against the disturbers of the peace. They shall declare themselves with the utmost energy. We will arouse from apathy every landowner whom the continuation of trouble exposes to ruin. We will answer for the success of this, provided that we are supported by the conduct of the King.

“The Council has done well in the matter of the emigrants; the Colonists and the business world were touched by the way the King answered them, and all were satisfied with the eagerness that the Minister of Marine puts into all that concerns them.

“The circular letter for the forming of the guard should, they tell me, be very shortly dispatched. The effect will be excellent; we must keep this up, and give it fresh life.

“It is indispensable to appear in public. The Queen cannot be too much interested in appearing at the play. It is also time to make charitable donations, as has been the custom.

“And also, what is the most important of all, to make Monsieur return. Should Monsieur return, then all is well; henceforth all feeling will be on the King’s side; he is sheltered from every suspicion and reproach. The success of these matters will be attributed to him, and every misfortune will draw all hearts towards him.

“If Monsieur lets the two months expire, he will be declared deprived of the Regency. M. d’Artois taking his place will be required in his turn to come back, and being equally disqualified, when the term has expired, Monseigneur d’Orleans will quit the kingdom, will await his summons, and then coming back when so summoned, will establish his rights and will acquire an alarming influence. Should

he then have any schemes, the only obstacle in his way would be the person of the King.

“So long as the princes and, above all, Monsieur are out of the kingdom, the National Guard must be kept on a footing of a hundred thousand men, always an element of civil war, and capable of affording, at the first signal, an army to the Republicans. Did the princes come back, all these dangers would disappear, the army would once more be the only public force, and there would no longer be any opening for untoward events.

“We ought to discuss with M. de Lessart the means of working this necessary recall; he will then speak to the Queen. We can only beg her to weigh its full importance and to lend trust to the methods proposed.”

Two days later, 25th November, a new collective letter. The Queen's counsellors have fresh recourse to her, and this time do not fail to praise her firmness and energy.

“*25th November.*”

“The Queen's courage is admirable; her courage is a guarantee of success. But to gain it we must act and bestir ourselves, for the enemies of royalty lose no moment, and if, while they attack, time be lost in swaying hither and thither, strength is dissipated in deliberation when it is necessary to strike public opinion, we let the Revolution make head, and approach the moment of a balance of forces and a doubtful victory.

“It is necessary that Monsieur should return. His return means the salvation of the State. No means can be more potent to make him decide on it than a message from the King borne by a man known to have his confidence. If the princes see themselves abandoned by the Foreign Powers they would have no part left to play but to embrace the King's interests in opposition to the faction now working to lay waste France and overturn the Monarchy. At the

same time, then, that we bring about their solicitation by the King, we must get the concurrence of the Emperor. This is the subject of a memoir we have drawn for M. de Mercy, which might be addressed to him by the Queen or by M. de la Borde. We will send this memoir to the Queen; she will tell us the means she prefers should be taken for its forwarding. If M. de la Borde is to send it, it must be accredited by a letter from the Queen. The Queen will tell us, equally, whether if, with certain modifications, she would herself address it to her brother.

“The choice of Mayor ¹ puts no obstacle in the way of distribution of charities. This must be seriously seen to in a few days.”

Marie Antoinette has her reasons for knowing that the new proceedings with the princes will be of no more avail than the preceding. A position had been taken up that no instance of hers or of the King's could overcome. She replies :

“29th November.

“The present moment is very disquieting, but it must be seen as a crisis to be conquered by courage and an even conduct of affairs, that it may be turned to our account. I am far from hiding from myself the dangers and difficulties of our situation. All things are against us. Monsieur's return is as necessary for our personal assurance as for the safety of the Monarchy. Circumstances themselves make the return more and more difficult. The summons made him, the detestable decree on the emigrants, in spite of the veto of the King, will keep Monsieur away more than ever. He has missed each moment when he might have come back with dignity. Now he is, perhaps, no longer master of the situation, even if we could succeed in making him feel the full importance of his return.

¹ Pétion.

“Our interest, mine above all, is so bound up with his return, that, whatever we may do, we shall never be thought of there save as interested parties and our moves save as forced. I believe then that we can only do harm by appearing to lay further stress on it. If, as M. de Lessart says, some third person undertook to try and persuade Monsieur, it should be to a certain extent without our concurrence and as though we had nothing to do with it. He could thus speak more freely of the danger we are in.

“Another important question asking solution is that of the Ministry. M. Garnier refuses, and this refusal is the more important that it throws fresh discredit on the Ministers and shows the unpopularity of their functions. Still we want a strong man, and a man of firm character. I do not think that M. Gaget de Gerville, who is proposed, has the required qualities.”

Thus, if outside the situation was little better, the attitude of the princes remaining so hostile, and the flood of emigration continuing to mount instead of diminish, the situation of the Monarchy at home got worse to the point of ministerial posts even falling into discredit, and becoming unpopular; and in the Monarchical party a man was vainly sought, “a strong man of firm character,” who would take upon himself the charge of Government. The discouragement of the Queen, or the optimism of the counsellors, which was better founded? Events were soon to show.



CHAPTER XII

THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION

AS we all know, it was the religious question which embroiled Louis XVI with the Revolution. It was that, too, that very nearly caused a rupture between Marie Antoinette and her revolutionary counsellors. The Legislative Assembly had begun to discuss the question of the banishment of priests who had not taken the oath. This proposal made the Queen indignant. She writes to Barnave and his friends :

“I will say nothing of this decree about the priests. It seems to me that there are no two ways of looking at it ; either the King puts his veto on it, or he must renounce the Constitution. For throughout this matter they are pleased to go contrary to the Constitution. The dangers we may risk thereby are not comparable to the unhappiness, the cruelty and the injustice which one would be part guilty of in sanctioning such a horror.”

Some days later, when the debates in the Assembly indicate that the decree of banishment is going to be voted, she writes again :

“The horrible and insidious decree which is about to be passed against the priests is a question that absorbs all others. On this article I feel the full embarrassment of the King’s position, but at the same time it seems to me that by the Constitution itself, which establishes liberty for all opinions, the King can refuse to lend himself to

such manifest violence and vexation. Besides, the King holds to his principles ; he has the right to, and he will not change them. This decree, if sanctioned as it stands, will make him contradict himself and will expose us in our own house to all the persecution of last April.¹ Why not adopt the amendment of M. de Montay ? It is a wise one, and no one could object to it."

But the counsellors seek to show the Queen that she exaggerates the bearing of the decree, that its effects will not be so serious as she thinks, and that the King's sanction is an absolute necessity.

" 18th November.

" Although the decree concerning the priests may be hard and conform little to the principles of liberty, still it is far from the severity of measures which have been proposed before now : it only obliges the priests to take the civil oath. This oath has nothing to do with religious matters, for the civil organisation of the clergy is not in the Constitution. Those who have no pension need take no oath, and the oath special to ecclesiastical functionaries, which has made all this trouble, is everywhere suppressed. The decree does not make the King contradict himself, it only obliges the priests to take the civil oath and merely prosecutes those who give trouble.

" There does not seem then that there is any sufficient reason to oppose the sanction of the decree, and it is not good to use this method without being sure of the effect. The refusal of sanction, rare, well applied, always supported by public opinion, may add immense force to the Royal power ; but an imprudent use of this right may entail the greatest dangers."

¹ On the 28th April 1791 the people stopped the King's carriage as he was going to St. Cloud to receive Communion at the hands of a non-juring priest.

Nevertheless, the Queen's counsellors seemed to reconsider themselves in the face of the public demonstrations against the decree, evoked in several of the departments and in Paris itself.

"No. 37, 5th December.

"The King will probably receive to-morrow or the day after a very handsome address from the department of Paris against the decree concerning the priests. This proceeding is of the highest importance, since it will put the King in a position to refuse the decree without any trouble, and since, moreover, it offers a new principle of resistance to the mistakes of the Assembly. We may hope to make many other departments follow the example of Paris.

"We have determined M. Duport¹ to revoke his decision. He is very well disposed, and he will be useful in influencing matters in a serviceable way and in keeping M. de La Fayette in the right path by his correspondence."

We see Marie Antoinette reassured. The King can refuse to sanction the decree, he will have public opinion at his back.

She writes :

"No. 38, 19th December.

"I waited after my last letter till the address was presented to the King. This being now public, it seems to me of utility that the King's veto should not be held back. They say that the sections are wanting to discuss this matter. If we wait for the addresses from the other departments, are we sure of a majority ? And any delay on the part of the King to take this step, will it not give birth to just what we want to avoid : a war of opinion for which the King would be made responsible ? I think then that the King should cut the matter short by issuing his veto on

¹ Duport-Dutertre, Minister of Justice and Chancellor, who wished to resign.

the decree, pure and simple, and that on Monday. As for the other measures spoken of, I will see to them, but for this there is no more to be said ; it should be done, and at once."

To this interrogatory the Queen's counsellors cannot help making reserves. The Court is not yet sufficiently popular to risk such a step, public opinion is not yet sufficiently pronounced thereon.

" No. 38, 10th December.

" We think, with the Queen, that the King's decision on the decree about the priests should be prompt so as not to give the ill-intentioned time to inflame people's minds. But before that veto goes forth, which justice and the Constitution may demand, we must make plainer the King's real intentions on which people seek to throw doubts.

" They would have good reason to say in the Assembly that the King knows how to obstruct things but not how to act, did he not preface this step relative to the decree with a reply to the message sent him on the gatherings of French people abroad, and on the ambassadors and ministers accredited to the foreign Powers.

" It is true there is very little time to prepare for it, but we shall see M. de Lessart to-day, and we will endeavour to arrange with him that the King's reply should be given on Monday, so that the veto can be notified on Tuesday.

" Opinion is on the whole disposed in the right direction, but we hear from all parts that the principal difficulty, that those who want the right thing have to conquer, is the impression made by the choice of the King's guard. It is quoted against everything that can be said in favour of his intentions.

" People agree to everything that can be said in favour of the Government, but they always end by saying : ' If the King wishes to maintain the Constitution he would not surround himself with its enemies.'

"How can there, in fact, be confidence when one knows that M. de Brissac consulted the princes before accepting,¹ and when one is very certain that these latter do not disapprove of those chosen.

"It is regretful that we must return to this matter so often, but past events should convince us of the influence of small things on great things, and our feeling for the Queen will not allow us to keep back truths from her which may ward off great misfortunes.

"If the Queen, and it should not be difficult, believe us, could get certain of the superior officers² (two or three only) placed in line regiments in a better position for them, and replace them by men who would inspire confidence, she would be doing something whose importance cannot be exaggerated to her, for it would be enormous; she would greatly strengthen the Government."

Nevertheless, the King decides for the veto and notifies the Assembly that he refuses to sanction the decree about the priests. No communication has been made at the same time by the Ministers regarding emigration and the forming of the King's guard, as the Queen's counsellors had desired.

Barnave is uneasy. How will the Assembly take this refusal? He follows the debate on the question himself, at the Assembly, and writes to the Queen during the sitting:

"The 12th, 5 o'clock in the evening.

"At the time of writing I am ignorant of what will result at the end of the sitting. The refusal of the sanction has been well received at the Assembly, and even better in Paris. The success of the sitting would have been perfect, without the blunders I had predicted and against which I had endeavoured to guard.

¹ The responsibility of reorganising the guard.

² Nominated to the guard.

“The Ministers have communicated nothing, and yet they had the right. If the Assembly is drawn into error it will be solely the result of this weakness on their part. I am indignant not to have the King’s proclamation cried in the streets.¹

“We may rest quiet on the effect of the veto, but I am anxious about the length of the sitting. If the proclamation and the King’s letter to his brothers had been read at the same time, there could have been no possibility of a mistake on the part of the Assembly. I will write to-morrow morning to the Queen if the circumstances seem to me to require fresh measures.”

“The 13th, in the morning.”

“The great length of the sitting had made me anxious as to its upshot. But it produced nothing disquieting, and yesterday’s sitting yielded the best results that we have seen since the acceptance of the Constitution by the King, which was the act best fitted to prove his good faith and to give to him personally all the due consideration that by right belongs to him. Ministers, though well meaning and even courageous, have been discouraged by the lack of practice in speaking before the Assembly, a drawback to which only time and practice can afford a remedy, and one that would be even more pronounced in those who might be put in their place.

“The position is excellent, but it must be maintained by a firm and popular lead.

“There is no time to be lost in naming Ministers. I have not changed my opinion in the choice I have indicated, and though Ministers may seem to insist on the first proposal they made, they are all, at the back of their minds, of the same opinion as myself.

“The news from the Colonies will soon be stale enough

¹ Referring to the emigration.

not to interfere with the attending of public performances. The attendance should be informal, and such as the Queen's taste may prefer.

"All the Ministers have adopted the notion of circular letters for the choice of a part of the King's guard. If the Queen approves, its execution cannot be too prompt. I still believe that the choice of M. de Lessart for Foreign Affairs, M. Garnier for the Interior, and M. de Narbonne for War, will set each in the place that suits him, and will form a Ministry perfectly homogeneous and as strong as we can get in the circumstances."

The Ministers are appointed, each to the place that suits. And the Queen shows herself again at the play with Madame de Lamballe. In great as in little things Marie Antoinette, having gained her point on the religious question, where her conscience was engaged, shows herself on the political side, desirous of following the advice given her.

Barnave is pleased.

"The Ministry has a clean sheet, means well, is in repute and is invested with public confidence. These advantages are not to be had at present with any others. Confidence should be shown them, and that will lend them strength. M. Bertrand ¹ is very well where he is : he would have been hard to replace. M. Garnier has, as we know, capacity and character. The choice will be popular. M. de Narbonne, who under the old régime was about the Court, will be all the better for that. Their quality ensures the safeguarding of the measure. The effect of the refusal of the sanction and its accompanying moves was great, and as felicitous as one could desire. Such conduct of affairs will very quickly revive the Monarchy.

"This must be a starting-point for an awakening from the languor in which it has lain for some while past."

¹ Bertrand de Moleville, Minister of Marine.

CHAPTER XIII

THE QUESTION OF THE FLAG

THERE was a question, however, whereon Marie Antoinette, with all her goodwill, could not come to an agreement with her counsellors. It was that of the formation of the King's guard, and particularly of the colours of their uniform facings. It concerned on one hand the personal security of the King and her children, and on the other the delicate matter of the King's colours themselves. On the one matter, as wife and mother, she hesitated to give ground—on the other, her attachment to the glorious traditions of the past did not allow her to yield. The Monarchical flag, in her eyes, could not be the Revolutionary one.

We have seen that Barnave returns insistently in his letters to this question of the formation of the new King's guard. He wants the men of the guard taken without distinction from all the provinces, that the officers should not be chosen from among the reactionaries. The Queen wants above all things that the guard should be composed of men on whom the King can count, who will defend him in case of commotion and be able to prevent the invasion of the Tuileries by bands of ruffians as once before.

She writes on 14th November :

“We are busy at present with the formation of the guard, and with possible means of drawing subjects from the various departments, which would meet our ends without exposing ourselves to the acceptance of a dangerous

choice, and one that might be made by Republicans. An excess of anarchy will enable the most adroit and the most unscrupulous to lay hands upon everything.

“It seems to me that we must rein it in by walking hand in hand with the Constitution and by safeguarding the rights it gives us. . . .”

Barnave replies, on the 15th November :

“To choose part of the guard from the departments is a step of the greatest importance ; but the result is lost, or rather it will be changed into suspicion and dislike, should any other means be adopted but that which we indicated. We have nothing to fear from a Republican choice in asking a departmental directory for subjects. These bodies, generally well selected, and hostile to the Clubs, which annoy them, and to disturbers of the peace whom they are constantly obliged to repress, are too far away to favour Republican principles. By giving them a mark of confidence we shall assure their devotion—an advantage that at the present moment is of the greatest importance—and we shall receive from their hands men who are well known and well thought of in the countryside. This choice will contribute to the Government’s popularity.

“Should we act otherwise, it is impossible that our choice should fail to have an aristocratic tinge ; it would necessarily fall on individuals known in the departments as reactionaries, although wearing the dress of the National Guard, and on enemies of the Constitution. The result would be most deplorable. Throughout the kingdom we should alienate the Constitutional party, which should be the real support of the King. We should give authority to the most absurd rumours of plots and methods of escape. We should have missed a chance of gaining thorough confidence and immense popularity, and substitute for it a most unpopular measure.

“In the letter to the directories we must ask for sensible men, and men whom they will answer for; but we must receive them at their hands. Should this merely bring the advantage of attaching the administrative bodies to us, there could be nothing more adroit.

“I suppose that the total number of men we shall ask from the administrative bodies and of the commanders of line battalions, will amount to five or six hundred men; there will remain two-thirds to be raised as we wish, and we shall have gained greatly in favour in the departments and in the army. We must not hesitate about this step. It is positive. It will take many years to find as likely an occasion.”

The Queen does all she can to give satisfaction to her advisers, but her preoccupation persists that the guard will end by being made up of people not to be depended upon, who would compound with the crowd in case of a riot and would turn against the King in the case of an invasion of the Tuileries. The memory of the outrages suffered at Versailles and at Paris haunted her always and filled her with apprehension. At least the officers who formed and commanded her troops must be men to be relied upon and personally devoted to the King.

This reserve and these hesitations did not please Barnave. He writes on the 29th November :

“If we wish to avoid the King’s guard becoming a source of trouble instead of a means of safety, we must look into every detail. All is lost if words dropped by officers become a subject of division between them and their men; all will be lost, too, if means are found to make a quarrel between the guard and the Paris National Guard, and the uniform alone will suffice for that. The uniform of both bodies must necessarily be made up of three colours. If the uniform be white it is easy for the facings to be red and

the collar blue. If the Cavalry is put into blue, the two other colours may easily be added. But the blue coat must be of the King's blue. It is the blue of the French, it is that of the National Guard ; sky-blue would give it the look of a foreign regiment and would become a badge of disfavour."

Looking for any means of accommodation, Marie Antoinette then bethinks herself of the uniform of the old French Grenadiers. That, at any rate, is quite French. It was worn by heroes who shed glory on French arms. She thinks now she has fully satisfied the counsellors' requirements. On the 30th November she writes :

"The uniform is changed. The ground will be of royal blue, as has been wished. The considerations submitted by these gentlemen are just and show right feeling. The uniform will be like that of the old French Grenadiers.

"I have but a moment to myself and can say no more."

But it is not at all what Barnave wants. He insists that the three colours be plainly shown.

"The three colours are, to-day, French. They are in the naval flag, in the cockade, the colours and standards of the troops. They are not, therefore, party colours, but the French national colours. Either the King does not stand for the nation, or those colours should be his. If other colours be taken, if the yellow *revers* be adopted, the colour of Coblenitz, we must expect a ferment which will reproduce the scenes of October 6th.¹ Is a kingdom to be lost for a matter of colours, for a thousand frivolous details, when so much constancy and sacrifice have gone to its conservation ? M. de Brissac's replies to various individuals who have presented themselves for service in the King's guard are known among the people in Paris.

¹ In Versailles.

“ ‘Are you a patriot ?’

“ ‘Yes, sir.’

“ ‘Very well ; go to the front. The King has no need of patriots in his guard.’

“ The Queen may judge of the effect of such words. The very builders’ labourers repeat phrases used before them by the King’s household when they go to work at the Château. This is the people’s thermometer. Are they wrong ? One must be witness to the innermost counsels if one is not to be deceived. You may drive the French people with ribbons, with a phrase that goes to the heart, with a smile that charms. Things equally little will lose them.

“ If the General or superior officers of the guard are to choose the privates who are still to be nominated, we may expect to have men who in a week’s time will be in open rupture with the National Guard. We shall have to ask the officers of the National Guard on which men we can count.”

It was just in “frivolous details,” the colours of the flag, standing for a principle, on which neither one nor the other would give ground. Compromise over the principle was a betrayal. Just a century later did not the same dilemma face another King-elect, who preferred to renounce, rather than to yield ?

Marie Antoinette, too, felt concession at an end.

“ *No. 36, 2nd December.*

“ It is impossible to make further change in the uniform of the King’s guard. All the orders for equipment have been given. It is the more pressing because it is essential that the guard, or at least a part of it, commence its service on the 1st January. The sky-blue and its attendant drawback (its resemblance to foreign uniform) being withdrawn, the jonquil-yellow cannot present any inconvenience, for

all the world knows that the Grenadiers of France were so clad, and to suggest the colours of Coblenz it must be *ventre-de-biche*. As for the three colours, the cockades, cravats and all that is regulation for troops of the line, being exactly followed, there is nothing more to be said. The Cavalry and Infantry will be dressed the same, except for details. Uniformity should look better and more imposing, and, besides, will cost less.

“If M. de Brissac said what is attributed to him, it was wrong of him, but I have every reason to believe it false. I see these gentlemen increasingly preoccupied (it is to their honour) in establishing mutual confidence and union between the new corps and the National Guard, the only way to assure our personal safety—but the Republicans, enemies of order, find it their interest to set at strife what at the moment we have every interest in keeping at one. Certainly the officers of the National Guard shall be consulted for the choice of good men for the King’s guard; provided that the departmental administrations do not take the chance of sending us the turbulent and insubordinate spirits from their cantons. Their choice of the worst of that kind for sending to the Legislature, gives one reason to believe it.”

But Barnave and his friends have also come to the end of their concessions, and are unable to yield on principle.

“No. 36, 3rd December.

“We must expect that if the colour of the facings is not altered the guard will be at loggerheads with the people from the first week, and before two months has elapsed theirs will be the fate of the body-guard.

“There is nothing to reproach the Republicans with; they are carrying out their own designs, they are consistent. One must lay the blame on oneself when one

does not know enough to put as much energy and determination in repulsing them as they put into their attacks. The greatest of all dangers for the Monarchy, the only one of which one cannot promise to get the upper hand, is the colour of a facing, and the choice of Messieurs Pont-l'Abbé and d'Herville, whose aristocracy, whose careless words, whose imprudences, will very soon embroil the guard with the town of Paris, and perhaps the guard with its officers.

“The three colours serve to unite the people with the King and against the Jacobins. The yellow colour puts the people with the Jacobins against the King. There is nothing to hope for when one weighs a kingdom against a uniform. All we can do to conciliate the opinion of the people, all the Republicans may do to split them apart, is as nothing by the side of the effect produced by the facings of a uniform. If it is insisted on, there is nothing to hope for.”

There would still, perhaps, have been time to change this wretched facing without affecting the principle. The Queen, endeavouring as far as possible to smooth everything and facilitate the task she had undertaken jointly with her counsellors, promises to do all she can to get the yellow or *ventre-de-biche* colour eliminated.

“No. 37, Sunday, 4th December.

“I have only a moment to myself, but I want to tell these gentlemen that I am grateful to them for the motives that have made them insist on the changing of the yellow colour. I am going to undertake that this change shall be made after a fashion that will not call attention to it or will not appear extraordinary, this matter having been already definitely settled.

“Should M. de Narbonne be appointed Minister to the War Office it would be wise if it were done promptly.

It is important that there should be a sensible and trustworthy man there."

Regarding this the Queen's counsellors are absolutely at one with her. This nomination, decided on by the King on Barnave's advice, as we have seen, was delayed by all sorts of intrigues.

" No. 37, 5th December.

" There is not a moment to be lost in nominating M. de Narbonne. The delay will only give the smaller news-sheets the time to run it down ; and above all, having once made this decision, which, in the circumstances is certainly the best, we must do it with a good grace, and not allow our zeal to grow cold. It would be well if he were nominated to-day.

" To replace M. de Narbonne¹ there are three men : M. de Valence, M. Grave and M. de Riécel. The last is certainly the most to be depended on. His private affairs seem to be the obstacle, but he is so devoted that we shall persuade him. We must make ourselves popular : we must have words, utterances of the King's, to be repeated and put in the papers, and deeds of charity. We must think of ourselves. M. de Lessart will lay before the Queen various simple measures of an excellent effect. The Assembly is behaving very badly. Factious people are active and bold ; there may be bad storms coming, but there is nothing to fear so long as we make no mistakes and lose no occasion of gaining confidence and popularity."

In spite of Marie Antoinette's zeal, she does not always succeed in getting her ideas accepted and carried out.

" No. 39, 13th December.

" It is impossible to carry on business with a Ministry which always waits till the last moment for the most

¹ As Major-General.

important matters. To-day the King should give a reply to the Assembly's message. Nothing is ready, and yesterday the Ministers had still no ideas to offer on the subject. Such slowness and such inertia stops anything useful being done. And to think that the Jacobins work without ceasing, and that the slower one is to act the more difficult it becomes to effect what one thinks useful and necessary."

She does not say so, but one gathers from her correspondents' reply that the question of the famous facings of the guards' uniform stands where it did, and that engagement for that service continues to follow the lines indicated by M. de Brissac. They write to her :

"No. 39, 13th December.

"Since, in the matter of the guard, the thing is done, it is useless to discuss it further. The Queen will come to know, by the disagreeables and annoyances that will be caused her by certain of those of whom choice has been made, whether we are right in feeling disquiet about it. To palliate the evil we must at least get them to show some consideration and civility to the National Guard. It is a small thing and would suffice to avert the split between the two corps which some would willingly see. Has the Queen clear notions on the choice of an officer to command the paid troops at Paris? It must be not merely a good soldier, but a man who knows how to win the affections of his troops, and is awake to its advantage in influencing opinion and the minds of people in Paris.

"There is really too much delay in answering the Assembly's message. As M. de Lessart is ill it is difficult to blame him. We saw him last evening, but finding that the speech he had prepared did not answer the purpose, we quickly reshaped it and are sending it to him. M. Duport had the chief hand in this.

"It shows small acquaintance with the state of things to be anxious about the very small stir that factious persons seek to make. Their very extravagances denounce them, and bring them to naught. Their party, far from increasing, weakens from day to day, and would be nothing at all did the King enjoy proper confidence. The measure would be a good one in so far as what it sets out to do, but so many things tend to weaken it. The King's civil list will soon, no doubt, be under discussion. If it be made up as were the general officers of the guard, there is no telling the evil that may result. This is the only chance there will be of putting certain persons in the King's surrounding who will not be opposed to the King's way of looking at things. We must seize upon it, or we shall live under eternal suspicion of holding other thoughts and intentions from those expressed in public.

"We will write to the Queen very soon about a new tentative to be made. A constant mind will see her through, but at the same time one must not arm one's foes against oneself."

It concerned a fresh appeal to the King's brothers to induce them to return to France. This time the approach was to be made with M. de Mercy as intermediary, and he was to be requested to intercede with the emigrant princes. Such was the new project of the Queen's advisers.

Marie Antoinette, while declaring that she had grave doubts whether the attempt had any chance of success, did not refuse to lend herself to it if they wished. They reply :

"The Queen will receive with this missive the memoir for M. de Mercy we have already told of. We shall address it to M. de Mercy from M. de la Borde, but it will be necessary for the Queen, by a letter to M. de Mercy, to acquaint him with the knowledge of the memoir and her

concurrence with it. It is greatly to be wished that the Queen herself send it to her brother directly, with some modifications. Did she so determine, we would send her back the memoir by M. de Lessart. It is needless to repeat that of all means of arriving at the wished-for good, Monsieur's return would be the quickest and the surest. Incessantly, even by those as far removed from the Republican as from the counter-Revolutionary party, are doubts spread on the sincerity of the King and Queen. This uncertainty may give birth to any danger. One does big things to dissipate the notion, but the little things keep it alive. It is spread about that whosoever is suspected of upholding the Constitution is insulted by everyone about the King's household. There is loud complaint that no one is well treated by the King and Queen save the most pronounced opponents of the Revolution. No doubt there is exaggeration in these complaints, but it is very desirable that there were no pretext for them. The Monarchy can only be saved by the *third party*. This party will dominate the rest. But it will not do to let them fear that they will be abandoned, or secretly hated by the King, for then, far from drawing to itself all the more moderate men of the factions, it will melt away, and end by dividing itself between Coblenz and the Republic.

"We need occasions to instil into the Ministers the King's and the Queen's intentions, since they are the only guarantors in the eyes of the public. We must take precautions that the people who surround the King should not continually witness against the sincerity of his resolutions.

"In fact, the King cannot be too careful to remove all doubt on his opinions by his conversation and by the reception given to various people. It is by persuading them of his sincerity that we shall attach to ourselves that which is actually the real King's party in France, and then we

shall regain those who have held back merely because of the hopes they had of a reaction.

“The Queen has chosen a capital occasion to reappear at the play. This must be continued, and no interval must be allowed to pass that might raise suspicions.”

The memoir mentioned in this letter is annexed here. It is a lengthy pleading in favour of the Constitutional Monarchy henceforth solidly established in France, and against every action by the Powers and the emigrants that might shake it and prevent the complete re-establishment of order. Therein it is said :

“The friends of the French Monarchy, those who want to ward off events that would soon become the signal for the upset of Europe, those who take an interest in the personal fate of the King and the Queen of France, must unite their efforts to make the princes and the French emigrants and, above all, Monsieur, the King’s brother, return to the kingdom.

“The position of the kingdom is such that, at the moment, the anxiety and distrust aroused by the threats of the princes and of the emigrants are the only cause which prevent the Royal power from recovery of its strength, and that leave it open to the effects of public dissatisfaction ; whereas, without the suspicions aroused by unwise behaviour, it would be impossible for anything unfavourable to occur.

“The present National Assembly is unenlightened, without guidance and without consideration ; from the upper classes of society to the lowest orders of the people everyone blames it for its abuses. Everyone knows the need of a more regular course and of giving the Government suitable driving force to maintain public order, collect the taxes and give back to France its prosperity and splendour ; and should no circumstances from outside

react at home, this sentiment will alone prevail over the nation, all confidence will be given to the King, public opinion will force the Assembly to move with him, or will give him the strength to override it, his power will rapidly gain the ascendant which ought to belong to him for the peace and happiness of the Empire. The alterations to be made to the laws necessary to give France a firm and strong government will not have long to wait.

“As things are actually situated that is not possible; evidences of affection are tendered the King, but no thorough confidence can be placed in him. His brothers being out of the kingdom afford his enemies too many ways of spreading suspicion. People are always disposed to believe that he is secretly in league with them; men the most attached to the Royal power dare not join his party because they doubt the sincerity of his intentions. The need generally felt of re-enforcing the executive power is balanced by the fear of seeing it used in favour of the princes. Mistrust and anxiety warrant insubordination, denunciation and calumny. A nation fed with illusions loses sight of its real interests, which lie to-day in the re-establishment of order and a strong government. France continues to live in her state of trouble and disorder, which cannot go on much longer without spreading the contagion to every nation in Europe. This state of things may cease in either of two ways. One is uncertain and disastrous. The other easy and possible. If force were used, the nation would make incredible efforts to resist, and whatever may be said, its means of defence of every kind are very real and very considerable. The mass of the nation, which would soon lend itself easily to changes and even ask for them, would never let them be imposed on it by force. The King himself would be obliged in case of invasion to act with it, both because he neither ought nor would separate himself from it and, moreover, because

he could not do so without exposing his throne and his life.

“To win success against France would require immense forces, and it is doubtful whether such success would be durable. The success itself and the efforts which it would induce would give all Europe a formidable shock. The revolutionary spirit that the French armies would carry over the frontier, or that foreign armies would draw from the heart of France, would be so contagious, and imaginations everywhere would be so strongly fired, that it is likely that many states would be shaken by the effect of such a commotion.

“The second method of escape from the disturbed condition we are now in is easy and certain. It is, through the cessation, by the return of the princes and emigrants, of the suspicion and unrest excited by their menaces, to bring attention to bear on the situation at home. The King, whom they are disposed to love, will then become the depositary of public confidence, and the need of tranquillity and public authority that is outweighed to-day by fear and suspicion, will become the universal desire. A nation, naturally quick and petulant, that has been pushed to exaggerations of liberty by ignorance, and by the excesses of a government which has abused its power, will as promptly return to feelings of moderation from the horror of anarchy, and the need of peace and of work.

“An immense majority wishes for order, and inclines towards the Monarchy. It is only held back by fear of betrayal. This majority will be loud in its condemnation of peace-breakers. Every citizen who is not a soldier will give up the cockade, the Revolution will come definitely to its end. The Republicans know so well that this is true that it is the subject of all their fears. They openly profess that what they call liberty can only be kept up by fear of force from without ; they call the order that would

be established should this disquiet cease, the peaceful counter-revolution, and it is the only one they fear.

“To temporise, to remain away from the kingdom, is no remedy. Far from curing the evil, it does but aggravate it. If Monsieur, the King’s brother, does not return before the expiration of the delay granted him, he will be—according to the Constitution—declared deprived of his rights as Regent, and it will then become far more difficult for him to return.

“But there is more in it than that ; Monsieur, being deprived of his rights, M. le Comte d’Artois succeeds, and will be, in his turn, summoned to return to the kingdom. Should he also let the delay expire, M. d’Orleans takes his place ; to have his right acknowledged thereto he leaves France, but he returns to it when summoned, and he comes back all the more popular because of the hatred that the King’s brothers have drawn on themselves ; there will only be the person of the King between him and the throne. This result cannot be doubted, and then how much worse the situation will have grown !

“France has at command at this moment a powerful instrument of civil war : more than a hundred thousand men of the National Guard on a war-footing for the defence of the frontiers. This body is easy to arouse and to irritate in any sense. It could supply an army for the Republic or for M. d’Orleans. This same body will be disbanded from the moment that an invasion is no longer feared. But so long as the frontiers are threatened, so long as the princes are out of the kingdom, it will remain on this footing and will be a most dangerous germ for a new revolution against the King.

“It is difficult not to believe that certain foreign Powers do not contribute to keeping up the troubles in which France is involved. The princes who, owing to their birth, have rights to the throne, certain individuals whose

property lies in France, the potentates bound to France by a political alliance and interested in her peace seeing the proximity of their States, ought they to serve her enemies' purposes ?

"These truths deserve to be seriously pondered by the person to whom they are addressed ; she will feel all their importance, without it being necessary to enlarge upon it.

"The Emperor's interest is incontestably allied to the upholding of the French Monarchy, to the stopping of our troubles, to the peace of Europe. All these results depend upon the return of the French princes. All are put in danger by their impolitic obstinacy. The Emperor has two means of influencing their behaviour : first, he may resolve to induce the German princes to forbid, following his own example, all gatherings and all preparation for war in their territory. In that way he discourages the emigrants and decides them to return ; he lessens our fears at home, and augments the popularity of the King and Queen to whose intercession this good deed will be attributed. Secondly, he may work on them directly, and no influence in the world would be so decisive to determine them. An invitation given by the Emperor to Monsieur would incontestably prove to him that his return is really his brother's wish, and would make him feel that there is no help to be had from the head of the Empire. That would settle it indubitably.

"The interest that M. de Mercy takes in the fate of France, his devotion to the Queen, leaves no doubt that he will seriously think over this memorandum. The time for action is short ; the success of these measures may settle the fate of France and prevent great misfortunes. M. de Mercy, who is able to appreciate all their importance, will leave nothing undone to carry them out with success."

The Queen replies to the note which accompanied this memorandum :

“ I have received the memorandum ; I think the notion a just one. But I am unable to send it in any way directly to Vienna, having the habit of sending everything by way of M. de Mercy. A change in that would arouse suspicions. When M. de la Borde is ready to send his script I will send him a word for M. de Mercy. I persist in believing that we must leave nothing undone to obtain the return of Monsieur. M. de Lessart has not made himself clear, or has misunderstood Madame de Séguin. What I told him was that I had informed these gentlemen in my last note, that ‘ *if someone undertook to persuade Monsieur to return, it must be said on our behalf, but as if without our knowledge ;*¹ for, should he say he was charged by us, it would suffice for them to pretend not to believe it.

“ My children and I go to the play on Thursday. I do not know what has given rise to the talk about people coming to the Tuileries of which you tell me. The King and I talk with the same amenity to everyone. As to the people who are with us and to the conversations they hold, we can do nothing but recommend all those who surround us the greatest politeness and the greatest circumspection. This order was already given them some time ago. It seems to me that the way the King and I behave, our perseverance in following the way pointed out to us, ought no longer to leave any doubt. No anxiety on this point should exist.”

¹ Underlined.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RETURN OF FERSEN TO PARIS

NEVERTHELESS, this new tentative to induce the emigrant princes to return to Paris had no more success than the preceding. It is not even shown that Mercy ever communicated Duport's memorandum transmitted to him by Marie Antoinette.

The relations of the Emperor's representative with Coblenz were already more than strained. He confided to Fersen, who happened to be near him at Brussels at the moment, that he had no longer confidence in the behaviour of the princes and the emigrants. Fersen notes in his diary of that date: "Mercy tells me that they do not want emigrants in the armies. That makes one think that the Powers have common opinions and want to re-establish everything on the old footing. All parties in France will join against them."

Fersen, who in the interest of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, was seeking to neutralise the efforts of the princes and *émigrés*, called their projects "foolish freaks" and their attitude to the King and Queen treason, had also seen through the interested views of the Powers in promising them help. He wrote to the King of Sweden: "Prussia is already asking who is going to pay." And Gustavus III replies: "Prussia and Austria have but one purpose, and that is to dismember France."

The King of Sweden, so ardent for the counter-

revolution when at Aix-la-Chapelle, had to a great extent given up that way of thinking since his return to Sweden. The opinion of the country was very decidedly against the rash adventure of interference in the affairs of France by Sweden, and Gustavus III began to see that Catherine II, while pushing him towards intervention, only sought to engage Prussia and Austria in order to keep them otherwise employed while she did what she wanted in Poland. He was no longer to be worked on so much by her fervent appeals to her *preux chevalier*, hastily to invest his "shining armour" and fly to the help of the French sovereigns so unworthily treated, but he quite shared her opinion when she wrote to him: "The trouble in France is the misunderstanding between the Queen and the emigrant princes in Germany." The growing difference of feeling between Louis XVI and his brothers, between Paris and Coblenz, made the question of intervention more and more thorny. The King of Sweden had come to mistrust the ambitions of the emigrant princes as much as the covetousness of the Powers. Comte Taube, head of Gustavus III's Privy Council, transmitting this letter from the King to Fersen, adds: "The King is very well informed of the princes' indiscretion at Coblenz, and trusts them no more. What would render all their plans futile and be the knockdown blow to them, would be that their Majesties should happily escape—for without that the Allied Powers, with or without the *émigrés*, will extricate them by hook or crook."

In the opinion of the King of Sweden, a fresh flight was the only means of getting the King and Queen of France out of the power of the factions, and, at the same time, to checkmate the intrigues of the princes and the covetousness of the Powers. We shall see presently that Fersen, by order of the King his master, was to try to get Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette to make a new attempt at flight

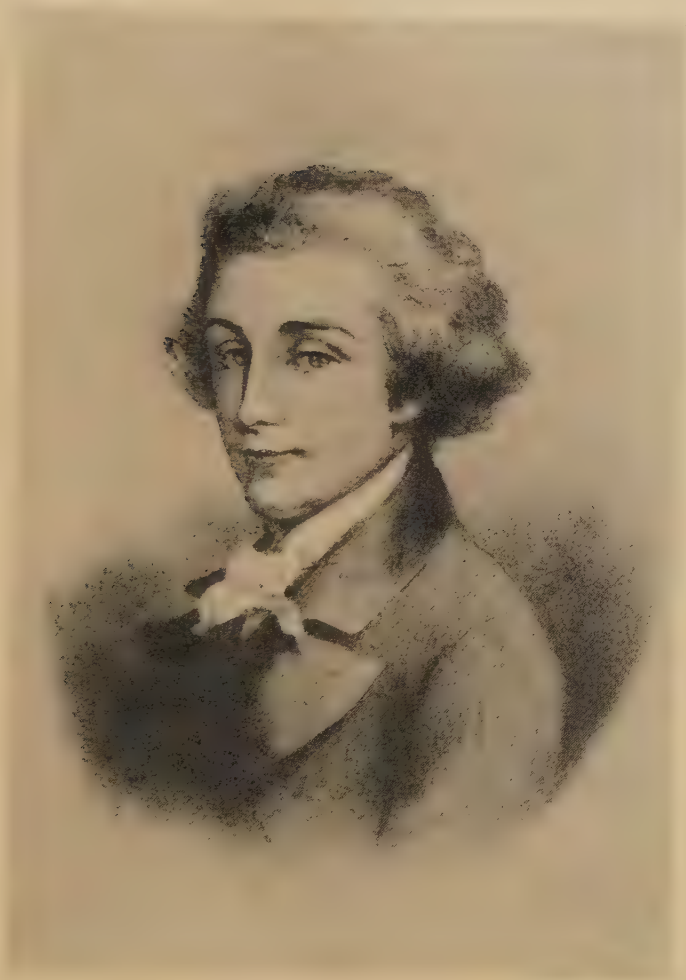
from Paris, without, however, succeeding in persuading Louis to the enterprise.

Fersen had not failed to keep his Sovereign duly informed of the understanding between Louis XVI and the Constitutional party in the Assembly, and of the secret negotiations between Marie Antoinette and the triumvirate of the left centre; and also of the dangers created for the Queen by this understanding, exasperating as it did to jealousy, hatred and fury the Jacobins and the Republican party. He wrote to the King :

“Your Majesty has no doubt been informed by your ambassador ¹ that it was at the moment of the King’s halt and return to Paris that the Republican party openly declared itself and wished to take the most violent measures. The authors of the new Constitution, fearful of seeing their work overturned, made advances towards a coalition with the King in opposition to the Republican offensive; and the King, abandoned by all the world, seeing no forward step made by the Powers, and following the advice of Mercy, made up his mind to join hands with them and accept the Constitution. The New Assembly was convoked. It shows a pronounced division into two parties, equally bad: the Constitutionals or partisans of the old Assembly, and the Jacobins or Republicans. The third party, the right, no longer exists. The first call themselves the friends of the King, that is, the Constitutional King; the second are the declared enemies of royalty, of order and of the whole executive.”

Between these two parties, “equally bad,” according to Fersen, the lives of the King and Queen of France would have been in great danger, had the undertaking dreamt of by the emigrant princes come to anything. The appeal to the King’s brothers having, as Marie Antoinette had

¹ The Baron de Staël.



COUNT AXEL FERSEN

feared, entirely failed in its object, the Queen's counsellors, whose faith had nevertheless remained robust and their optimism unflinching, decide among themselves to make a supreme and last appeal to the Emperor himself. Without his help the emigrants could in any case undertake nothing. They did not despair of inducing him definitely to refuse them his help. They write to the Queen :

" No. 40, 21 December.

" The Queen will receive the memorandum to-morrow of which she has been told. She must make every effort to prevent the emigrants from being supported by the Emperor. The decree made yesterday on the recalcitrant emigrants has come at the right moment to prove that the intention of the Assembly, as well as that of the King, is to behave towards the Emperor as a good neighbour and a faithful ally. It is important that we should use this motive to make the Court at Vienna decide to follow, as regards us, that line of conduct it has observed since the acceptance by the King. Should the result of the great step we are about to take prove fortunate, should the emigrants be scattered, this would be a very useful occurrence for the Government ; it would give back to the King all the confidence he deserves, and lower the value of the opposing party. It would put a stop to the restlessness which is the greatest obstacle in the way of peace. The nation, entirely occupied with its troubles at home, will feel the need to give the Government the necessary power to assure public tranquillity and to set the administration going. The public disposition is good, but it must be carefully cultivated. The Queen does very well to appear often in public, and also to interest herself in charity. The time of the year makes it seem a natural occurrence. It is more than merely political wisdom. Monday's conversation has left us with a very good impression,

although we found that on certain points there was too little confidence."

Is Marie Antoinette in truth beginning to lose confidence in her counsellors? Does she understand that their rôle is finished, their powerlessness a reality, and in spite of the persistence of their belief in the final triumph of their ideas and of their party, that the Republicans are gaining all the ground lost by the Constitutionalists? One may believe it, judging by what she confided a little later to Fersen on his arrival in Paris.

"The Queen tells me," Fersen notes in his journal, "that she has still been seeing Lameth and Duport,¹ but that they have lost all influence; that they continued to tell her that the only thing was to prevent foreign troops from coming; that, failing that, all was lost; that she felt that this hope could not be sustained and that it would prevent nothing. The Queen believes that these gentlemen have gone further than they wished, that it was the stupidity of the aristocrats which had been the cause of their success, and the conduct of the Court that had saved all by joining with them. But they had come to be guided by nothing but their hatred for the present Assembly, where they had no longer any influence."

However that may have been, the Queen does not wish to turn a deaf ear to their suggestions, and makes up her mind to support the new tentative that her counsellors wish to make with the Emperor, while persuaded that she has small chance of success, and declaring herself more than ever incapable of influencing in any way her brother's political designs.

M. Duport's memorandum, which was mentioned to her in her correspondents' notes, is among the bundle of papers.

¹ Barnave had just left for Grenoble.

It is a voluminous manuscript of twenty-seven pages, on the margin of which the Queen has noted: "Report by M. Duport, sent by me with its supplementary pages."

We will refrain from reproducing it here, owing to its excessive length. However, the arguments used to exhibit the unseemliness of the emigrants' intrigues, the dangers of foreign intervention in France, to depict the prosperity of the country under the new Constitutional administration, are nearly the same as those we have seen used in all the letters of the Queen's advisers.

Marie Antoinette hastens to give this statement her entire approbation, while at the same time reserving herself as to the effect it will produce.

"No. 41, 24th December.

"I have read M. Duport's memorandum with the greatest interest. All that it contains on the state of affairs and on the particular line we must follow, seems to me perfect, but I should like to be more amply informed on all that has to do with the Emperor. Do you think you can change anything in a system that we know to have been adopted six months ago, a system that they believe over there to be the only one likely to bring about a successful result? Nevertheless, I will get this memorandum handed on to the Emperor. But I have no other means of doing so except by Brussels, and M. de Mercy. I will make, when I have a little more time to myself, a few remarks that will go to prove more and more to these gentlemen, my frank desire to keep up communications with them."

Fersen, who certainly does not love the Queen's counsellors, and thinks that they deceive her by their optimism, and hide from her the real dangers that surround her and increase with the fears of a foreign intervention,

notes in his journal, when he has knowledge of Mercy's memorandum :

“ Regarding the Queen's memorandum to the Emperor. Detestable. It is made by Barnave, Lameth and Duport. They think they will frighten the Emperor and prove to him that it is to his interest not to make war on France, but to uphold the Constitution. For without that the French would spread their doctrines in his country and debauch his soldiers. One can see, nevertheless, that they are afraid themselves.”

While Marie Antoinette is preparing to dispatch this memorandum to Mercy, Louis XVI receives a letter from Leopold II presenting the protest of the Empire regarding the rights of the princes in occupation in Alsace, and making reserves as to the attitude of Austria to the emigrants and the new influences in France. Should not this circumstance change the line of the memorandum that the Queen has promised to send on to the Emperor ?

She adds at the end of the letter quoted above, in which she acknowledges to her counsellors her receipt of the memorandum :

“ The official letter which the Emperor has just written to the King might yet alter something in the lines of the memorandum. It is not that my opinion is not very set regarding the danger there would be should the Emperor support the emigrants, and as to the utility of their return for the re-establishing of peace in France.”

But Barnave and his friends consider that the Emperor's letter effects no change in the situation. They continue to believe that this move on the part of the Queen would be both useful and efficacious.

"No. 41, 26th December.

"The official letter from the Emperor can alter nothing in the memorandum that the Queen proposes to address him. We must believe that the Emperor wished to separate absolutely the matter of the princes in occupation in Alsace from that of the French emigrants, and having taken such steps in regard to the first—the only matter which interests the Germanic body—as he conceives himself forced to take as head of the Empire, he reserves himself freedom of action as regards the second, according to his own system of policy.

"The official letter is then one reason the more for hoping that he may continue to follow the course he has already adopted in regard to the emigrants.

"In the situation in which we find ourselves, the attitude that the Emperor has taken up is what it ought to be—in that he recognises the liberty of the King and the validity of his acceptance, while acting towards France as a faithful ally. One may plainly see his intention of defending and upholding Royal dignity and Constitutional prerogative.

"If the Emperor considers what a terrible shock for the whole of Germany the invasion of an army of National Guards on the soil of the Electors would be, he will feel it in the interest of all to prevent this extremity; and if the Electors are aware of his intention, if they know they can look for no help from him, it is not possible that they can hesitate to give the satisfaction demanded of them.

"On the whole, the more the Emperor contributes to shorten our quarrel with the emigrants, the more he will appear a faithful and useful ally to France, and at the same time, while imposing his will on anarchist and Republican parties, he serves the interest of the King."

Marie Antoinette had good reason for not sharing her

correspondents' optimism. For all receipt of the memorandum sent by her to Mercy to be transmitted to the Emperor, Leopold II's representative writes her an unsigned note, dated in Vienna, 9th April 1792, in which, without referring to the memorandum, he contents himself with assuring the Queen of his profound devotion :

"The inviolable devotion that I have sworn to all the posterity of the immortal Marie Thérèse, and most particularly to Your Majesty since your childhood, will only end with my life."

Things were too far advanced for the appeal to the feelings of the Emperor to have any effect. Little by little, Austria and Prussia, worked upon by Russia, who wanted a free hand in Poland, inclined to the notion of armed intervention in France. It was no longer possible to avoid the conflict that was preparing. Soon after comes news that 14,000 emigrants at Coblenz were in arms, and preparing to march over the frontier, while a convention was signed at Vienna, between Prussia and Austria, to invade France with 240,000 men.

This news threw the Queen's counsellors into consternation. They write on 30th December :

"The news from Vienna is extremely disquieting, and if the effect is not warded off by a bold stroke, the whole brunt will fall upon the King, and still more upon the Queen. Should the King remain silent at this moment, he will seem to be implicated in the Emperor's move, and his own behaviour will be looked upon as a snare. In the midst of such a critical state of things he will be divested of prestige and authority. So it is essential that the King should take action first. Let him come in person to the Assembly with a speech of a few sentences full of dignity and patriotism, and he will defeat beforehand the enemies of royalty who are trying to spread mischievous impressions abroad.

“ If this step is not adopted, if it is not done by to-morrow, it is difficult to foresee up to what point the enemy may not draw advantage from an event whose every appearance seems to witness to their calumnies. We are going to concern ourselves with the King’s speech. We will return it to M. de Lessart before the time of the Council meeting. It is necessary that it should be adopted without change, for circumstances are so critical that every expression should be carefully weighed and dictated by one and the same mind.

“ If this be done, it is possible that this occurrence, far from harming the King, will contribute to his influence and his credit. But if we allow ourselves to be forestalled, if we keep silence, if we let time pass, all is lost.”

Some hours later “ the agent ” writes this note to the Queen :

“ Saturday, 8 o’clock in the morning.

“ These gentlemen wrote to me at 4 o’clock in the morning to charge me to make known to the Queen at the moment of her rising, that a message from the King to the Assembly would be more advantageous and more suitable than if he were to go himself. They charge me to draw the Queen’s attention again to the importance of changing nothing in the speech that M. Lessart should have remitted to the King, and which should be sent to the Assembly this morning.”

These two letters are the last communications of the Queen’s correspondents that are to be found in the record.

Barnave, who for some time had been talking of going to Grenoble, left Paris at this moment. Being no more in the Assembly, and held in suspicion by the Jacobins and the anti-Monarchical party, he had lost all his influence and was conscious of his powerlessness. He hoped to recover his popularity in his native town and be returned for the

next Assembly. Seeing himself henceforth impotent to react against events which were now hastening their pace, or of being of the slightest use to the Queen, he announced to her in a final interview that he was leaving Paris at last. In one of her last letters to "these gentlemen" on 28th March 1791, Marie Antoinette said :

"I know that M. Barnave is going away one day soon, and I am aware of the powerful motives that have decided him. I count on his not forgetting the end of our last conversation."

With Barnave's departure, this correspondence of Marie Antoinette with the *triumvirate* of the Constitutional party, which had lasted for six months, came to an end. The state of Barnave's mind when he left and when the correspondence ceased is revealed to us in the lines he wrote at the time of his return to Grenoble, in the early days of January 1792, and which have been found among his papers. They are marked with profound melancholy and thorough discouragement.

"What immense space we have covered in these 'three years.' We have stirred the earth very deeply ; we found a fruitful soil. But how many corrupt exhalations arose from it ! Back amid my penates, I ask myself, had it been better never to have left them."

Meanwhile the position of the King and Queen in Paris grew more and more critical. War with Austria and Prussia was imminent ; the crusade formed against France was no longer a subject of doubt. In spite of Louis XVI's declaration, the Assembly joined with the country in the indignation roused by the threat of invasion and the united efforts to repulse it ; the excitement of the populace, the irritation felt against the Queen, and the distrust of the King all grew from day to day.

Fersen's anxiety, as he followed the advance of this movement, from Brussels, became acute. According to his opinion an attempt at escape was henceforth the only means of saving the lives of Louis and his family. The King of Sweden, with whom he held a lively correspondence on the subject, was also of this opinion. He ordered him to return to Paris, and to do all he could to help towards the escape of the King, the Queen and their children.

Fersen writes to Marie Antoinette on the 24th January 1792 :

" . . . The King and the Empress ¹ insist on a further flight, and I am bringing you a memorandum on the subject and some letters from the King. His plan is that it is to be carried out by sea and with the help of the English. There must only be two people in your confidence. I will give you fresh proof of the Emperor's behaviour. They tell me the Queen of Portugal is very well disposed. She has a good deal of money, and they say she will give it. I think it would be well to write to her. It will help her to make up her mind. I am making all arrangements to arrive at Paris on Feb. 3rd at 6 o'clock in the evening." ²

But the Queen dreads to see him arrive in Paris. He will certainly be recognised. His presence alone will lead to the belief that a further attempt at flight is to be made. The King and the Queen will be seriously compromised in the face of the Assembly and of the people. Fersen himself will be exposed to great danger. She fears for his life.

But Fersen insists. He will take every precaution possible. He leaves as a messenger from the King of Sweden, sent to Portugal and only passing through France. He will make himself absolutely unrecognisable.

¹ Gustavus III and Catherine II.

² Klinckowström, *Fersen and the Court of France*.

At length he notes in his diary on 28th January :

“The Queen has at last consented that I shall go to Paris.” But on the following day he adds : “A letter from the Queen, who begs me to defer my journey until the passport decree is confirmed and peace more nearly established.” And again, on 3rd February : “A letter from the Queen, saying it is impossible to come owing to personal passports, and I must give it up. That is bad for me and bad for the business in hand. People have pretended to suspect the King’s departure, and there is much uproar about it in Paris. All this to prevent the King’s new guard from taking up its functions fixed for the 10th ; and passports were decreed to prevent all departures, should this attempt have taken place.”

In spite of all this, he persists in his plan, and the Queen ends by yielding, the King having refused to sanction the decree about the passports. We read in his journal :

“ Monday, 6th February.

“I have made up my mind to leave for Paris, on receiving a letter from the Queen, who informs me that the decree about the passports will not be sanctioned, and that French people who have got through all right write and tell her so.”

“ Friday, 10th February.

“I have made all my preparations to leave.”

“ Saturday, 11th February.

“I left at half-past nine by postchaise with Ruitersvard, without a servant. We have a courier’s passport for Portugal under assumed names.”

He reaches Paris the 13th February and enters the Tuileries late at night. He only sees the Queen, the King

being already in bed. The next day he returns and sees the King. He inscribes in his diary :

"Tuesday, 14th February.

"Saw the King at six o'clock in the evening. He will not leave ; the supervision is very close, but in truth, I understand that he has scruples about it, having promised so often to remain, for he is an honest man."

On his return from Varennes, Louis XVI had promised not to attempt to escape again. He will keep that promise. He says to Fersen in a tone of simple resignation : "I want to be left to my fate ; leave me to act as I think fitting." He wishes to remain faithful to the Constitution he has given his word to ; he will hold to it till the end. Marie Antoinette proudly refuses the notion of escaping with her children without him. She also wants to be faithful to her duty until the end.

The better to mislead people and turn away all suspicion, Fersen leaves Paris and takes the road to Bordeaux, as if he were going on his way to Portugal as a courier. But having reached Tours, he turns back under a fresh disguise and returns to Paris. Night having fallen, he enters the Tuileries and sees the King and Queen once more. He renews his attempt to persuade them to escape. Again he fails.

"Tuesday, 21st February.

"I took tea and supper with them. I left them at midnight. Franz let me out by the main gate. At one o'clock we got into our carriage, a light one, and harnessed with three horses. Soon afterwards we left Paris."

In spite of his ardent wish to remain near the Queen, to devote himself to saving her, he was obliged to leave again. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette refused to put the care for their personal safety before what they con-

sidered the first duty of their position. And Fersen's presence in Paris only made the position worse. That alone would betray schemes of escape, were he recognised and taken, prowling round about the Tuileries. It would suffice to exasperate the sections, excite the populace and cause the Château to be invaded so as to keep guard on the King and Queen. Everything, therefore, indicated to Fersen that it was his duty to go. He thought himself lucky to have been able to leave Paris unrecognised. He writes to Taube on reaching Brussels :

"My expedition to Paris went off well, although I was unable to carry out what the King wanted. Flight is physically impossible at the moment, owing to the supervision, which is very close."

Marie Antoinette had formerly written to Fersen telling him that she had entered into a regular correspondence with Barnave and his friends : "You shall judge of it yourself, for I am keeping it all for you."

During this last evening of 21st February that he spent with the King and her, Marie Antoinette had given him the letters that she had exchanged with them. She begged him to take them with him and to keep them carefully. One never knew into whose hands they might fall did she keep them with her. And Fersen had carried off this correspondence. He confided it to his sister's care—Sophie Piper, the depositary of all his secrets. That is how it comes to be found to-day in the Castle of Löfstad in Sweden.

But Louis XVI had not been as careful as Marie Antoinette to get rid of all that could betray the dealings of Barnave and his friends with the Court. He left a paper lying in his drawer that sufficed to incriminate them.

After 10th August this paper was found, and on 15th August 1792 the deputy Rivière drew attention in the

tribune to a paper found in the King's desk and entitled, "Plan for a Committee of Ministers arranged with MM. Barnave and Lameth." And legal proceedings were ordered against Barnave and Alexandre Lameth, along with the Ministers.

Lameth was saved by La Fayette, who took him with him to the Army of the North. But Barnave was arrested at Grenoble, and after passing a year in prison he appeared on 28th November 1793 before the revolutionary tribunal, at the same time as Duport-Dutertre, one of the Ministers. They were condemned to death, and executed the next day.

In a letter to his sister, before his death, Barnave said :

"I am still young, and yet I have known, yet I have already suffered, all the good and all the ill of which human life is made up. Gifted with a lively imagination, I have long believed in illusions. I am undeceived, and at the moment of leaving this life the only good thing I regret is friendship. None could flatter himself more than I on having tasted its sweetness. And also the cultivation of my mind, a practice that often filled my days with delight."



CHAPTER XV

THE TRAGIC END

RETURNED to Brussels, after his fruitless attempt to tear the Queen away from the dangers that threatened her by making her leave Paris, Fersen has but one thought : to do his utmost towards intervention of the Powers to save her. To strike a great blow and dictate conditions in Paris was henceforward the only means of helping her. Just as he had hitherto, according to the Queen's desire, worked to thwart the selfish plans of the King's brothers, and to bring about a congress of the Powers which was to ensure peaceful understanding with France, and the recognition of the Constitutional Monarchy, even so was he now anxious to see invasion undertaken, and the great blow struck that alone could save the King and Queen from the tyranny of the Jacobins and the frenzy of the sections. He writes to Marie Antoinette as soon as he is back at Brussels :

" 6th February 1792.

" It is absolutely necessary to get you out of the position you are in, and now only violent means can do it."

In face of the slowness and indecision of the Powers, he is even delighted that it is the Assembly in France that takes the initiative and declares war. Thus the Powers can no longer draw back ; they will be forced to take action. He writes further :

“Brussels, 24th April 1792.

“I received the news yesterday of the declaration of war, and I am extremely pleased. It is the best, the only way to force the Powers to take action. The Empress (Catherine II) has announced in Vienna her intention to take an active part in the affairs of France, and that she wants the re-establishment of the Monarchy as it was before the Revolution. It was M. de Mercy who gave me this news.”

The Queen has no longer got her advisers of former days round her. They are dispersed. The Constitutionalists' Club has been attacked, the Feuillants turned out in the midst of the joyful cries and jeers of a mob let loose. Pétion, in his position as Mayor, hastens to calm the riot, but when the Feuillants ask his intervention, he replies cynically: “The law is on your side, but the people are against you; I must listen to the voice of the people.”

It is La Fayette now who approaches the Queen and counsels her. He it is on whom she counts to assure the safety of the Tuileries, to safeguard the King and her children. But La Fayette himself is no longer sure of his authority; he proposes to the Queen she should leave Paris and flee with him to Compiègne. Marie Antoinette writes to Fersen:

“I have refused to yield to the suggestion of de La Fayette and of Luckner to go to Compiègne, so as not to fall into their hands, and give the Powers, however disinclined, a pretext to negotiate.”

The Ministers are attacked and vilified in the Assembly. They are accused of permitting an “Austrian Committee” in the Tuileries, which meets in the Queen's apartments, to conspire against France. Lessart and

Montmorin are members of this Committee. We know from the Queen's correspondence of whom this secret council was composed and in what way they conspired against France. Barnave and his friends were not always in agreement with Montmorin; they had thrust Lessart into the Ministry; but with neither the one nor the other had they any anti-French policy, nor had they acted otherwise than as good patriots in the counsel they gave the Queen, any more than she had done by following it. Nevertheless, Brissot demands the prosecution of Lessart. The Queen is rendered responsible for having nominated him, and she is openly threatened in the sections and at the tribune. Madame de Lamballe grows frightened at this, and she writes to Fersen to warn him that "they are going to denounce the Queen in this Lessart affair, and separate her from the King and put her in a convent."

Fersen then becomes feverishly active in the cause of European intervention.

But two unexpected deaths paralyse his action. Leopold II dies in Vienna, on 9th March; Gustavus III is struck by the conspirator's bullet at the Opera House ball at Stockholm on 16th March, and dies on the 30th from the results of the wound.

Regarding the first event, Fersen says, when writing to the Queen: "This sad news gives pleasure to some and pain to others, by reason of the delay that this event brings about in our business."

In his diary he wrote on the same date: "I do not hesitate to regard Leopold's death as more or less a good thing for the King of France." He believes that the new Emperor, Francis II, will be quicker, as well as more inclined to take action in the real interests of the sovereigns of France, and with less hidden self-interest regarding the profit to be drawn from it. But the

King of Sweden's death overwhelms him. He writes to Marie Antoinette :

"You are already aware of the sad and overwhelming news of the King's death. You have lost in him a pillar of strength, a good ally ; and I, a protector and a friend. This is a cruel loss."

To his sister, the Comtesse Piper, he confides his perpetual anxiety :

"Paris is always the same, and my fears for the life of the King and Queen preoccupy me incessantly. The seditious no longer hide their plans, and the Palace is threatened at any moment. Their Majesties can no longer go out together, nor sleep, at the same time. They rest alternately, so that there is always one who watches, in the expectation of seeing their apartments forced by these cannibals. It fills me with horror, and their position is heart-rending for those who know, as I do, all the details."

His fear is now that he will be recalled to Sweden. On the death of Gustavus III, his brother, the Duke of Sudermania, is declared Regent during the minority of the future King, Gustavus IV. His attitude, which was opposed to Gustavus III's policy, will perhaps tend to make him put an end to all participation, even apparent, of Sweden in the anti-revolutionary movement gathering force against France, and insist that Fersen, who under the late King had filled a semi-official position at the Courts of the Powers in coalition, shall leave Aix-la-Chapelle and Brussels the better to mark the abstention of Sweden. Fersen writes to the Queen :

"I have still no news regarding myself, as I do not know whether I shall be recalled or not. My father begs me to return and to leave everything. That I will never do, must I be reduced to utter destitution. I can live

on my personal effects for a time by selling them, but if he induces the Duke to think as he does, I shall find myself embarrassed, and deprived of my salary at the same time. As I am thus dependent on them, they hope to force me to give in in this way. Even if the Duke does not lend himself to this, certainly my father will try that method. Nothing on earth would make me drop everything now.”¹

But the Duke does “lend himself,” without insisting, as yet; he sends word to Fersen, by his sister, Comtesse Piper, who fills the place of lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Sudermania, that he must be prepared to return shortly to Sweden. Fersen has decided not to obey. How can he go and “drop everything” at the time when his anxiety for the Queen is so great? Marie Antoinette seeks nevertheless to reassure him. She sends him, on every occasion that she can, short notes, written secretly in sympathetic ink, in which she forces herself to depict her position in as reassuring colours as possible.

“The nation,” she says, “has too great need of the King, and of his son, for there to be anything to fear. As for me, I fear nothing, and I would rather run every danger than suffer the humiliations of which they give us our fill.”

Somewhat reassured, Fersen writes to his sister on 9th June:

“All the news is good, may it continue to be so. The august prisoners are in safety, and up to now there is no motion nor movement against them. That affords us a little hope of seeing them one day delivered from their long captivity. Should I one day rejoice in the sight, what a moment for my heart! I know they are well, except poor little Madame, who is in a bad state of health. . . .”

He nursed these illusions still on 9th June.

¹ Klinckowström, *Comte de Fersen and the Court of France*.

Ten days after, the day of 20th June, the mob invaded the Tuileries ; the King and Queen were outraged, their lives threatened.

On 21st June the Queen writes to Fersen :

“ Do not be too unhappy on my account. Pray believe that courage does not go for nothing. The part we are playing will give us, I hope, the time to wait till help comes. But the weeks will be very long. I dare not write more. Adieu ; hasten if you can the help that is promised us for our deliverance.” And she ends the note by adding, in sympathetic ink : “ I am still alive, but it is a miracle. The day of the 20th was awful.”

To hurry on this promised help, as the Queen asked, became then for Fersen the preoccupation of his days and nights. On the 25th June he replies to his friend :

“ *Mon Dieu !* How your situation grieves me ! I am affected, sorrowfully and sensibly, to the very soul. Try, whatever you do, to remain in Paris, and help will come. The King of Prussia is decided and you can count on him.”

She tries further to console him in a letter on the 3rd July :

“ I have had your letter of the 25th. I was much touched by it. Our position is frightful, but do not be over-anxious. I am not without courage, and I have that within me that tells we shall be saved—the very belief holds me up.”

But, as the 14th July drew near, and the celebration of the taking of the Bastille, they are prepared for further trouble. The Queen no longer dares write to Fersen herself. She charges Goguelat to write for her and give him news of her. But he has not the same reasons as she to try to attenuate its gravity.

“ 6th July (1792).

“ We look for a terrible catastrophe on the 14th in every corner of Paris, and particularly from the Jacobins. Regicide is preached. There are sinister plans forward, but as they are known perhaps it may be possible to defeat them. The Jacobins come in crowds from every province ; no day but the Queen is warned to be on her guard ; one time an officer, another time someone else. They leave her not a moment’s peace.”¹

Meanwhile Prussia and Austria, and the emigrants also, prepare an offensive. It is the critical moment for the Queen. The Assembly declares the country in danger ; Brissot cries from the tribune : “ Legislators, you are told to fear the Kings of Hungary and Prussia. I tell you these Kings have their main power at the Court, at the Tuileries—and it is there that they must be vanquished first.”

Fersen writes to the Queen :

“ *Brussels, 28 July.*

“ Now is the critical moment, and I am shaken to the soul. God keep you all, that is my one prayer. If hiding yourself be of any use, do not hesitate, I implore you, to do so. It may be necessary to give time to get at you. If it come to this, there is a cellar in the Louvre, in Laporte’s lodgings. I believe it to be little known, and safe. You might use it. This is the day the Duke of Brunswick sets forth ; he will want eight or ten days to reach the frontier. It is generally supposed that the Austrians will attempt the line of Maubeuge.”

Marie Antoinette is far removed from any wish to hide, and they are too narrowly watched, the King and she, but that their disappearance would be immediately signalled. And besides, the King refuses. Throughout the events that

¹ Klinckowström, *Fersen and the Court of France*, vol. ii. p. 318.

followed the attack of the 20th June he shows the greatest calm, the most perfect placidity. For nothing in the world would he take refuge in the cellar, any more than the Queen would leave him to do so alone. But she cannot write to tell Fersen—she is too closely watched. It is Goguelat who writes again for her, in sympathetic ink :

“The King’s life is constantly menaced, even as is the Queen’s. At this moment one has to seek to avoid the dagger, and defeat the conspiracies that swarm up round the throne now ready to founder. For long past the trouble-makers have taken no care to hide their design of destroying the Royal Family. In the last two night-sittings of the Assembly they are only in dispute on the method.”¹

Fersen replies :

“7th August 1792.

“My anxiety is extreme. And the small dependence one can place upon the National Guard, even on the better-intentioned part, makes me despair. I have always been convinced that one could no more count on them than on the well-intentioned people of Paris, who fear to come forward and risk a scratch, and who limit themselves to pious wishes while the scoundrels act. . . . We hurry on operations as fast as we can. . . .”

Then comes the day of the 10th August, and the captivity of the Royal Family. Fersen is stricken. He writes to his sister :

“You will know, my dear friend, from the Duke,² the details of the frightful 10th of August. The family is saved, but one cannot be reassured as to their fate.

¹ Klinckowström, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 340.

² Le Duc de Sudermanie, Regent of Sweden, often sees Comtesse Piper, whose functions as chief lady-in-waiting at the Court often call her to the palace.

God keep them. I would give my life to save them. The palace is sacked and pillaged and the family in prison at Les Feuillants. No one dares approach them. . . .”

What adds to his torment is the absence of news. Communications with Paris are interrupted by the war. The Queen can no longer write, and Goguelat, if he writes, cannot get his letters through. The letters of Fersen to his sister alone indicate to us his state of mind in this distressing situation.

“*25th August (1792).*

“No news, my dear friend. I am in despair. Pity a suffering brother. . . .”

“*12th September.*

“We have no news of the Royal Family. It looks as though everyone, criminal and journalist alike, had passed the word for silence, that they should be forgotten. I would I could think it a good sign, as others do, a proof of intention to preserve them. Every reason one can bring to bear on it leads one, it is true, to believe as much—but for my part I dare not. Perhaps I see everything in black. All I have been witness to these four years makes me hate my kind. . . .”

At Dusseldorf, whither he goes to seek an understanding with Mercy-Argenteau, Fersen learns of the indictment of Louis XVI. And then it is a cry of despair :

“*Dusseldorf, 24th January (1793).*

“Oh, my gentle and good Sophie, it is only in you that I find consolation, and I feel more than ever the need of you and your sympathy and the value of your friendship. Taube¹ will give you all the details of the King’s trial ; it makes one shudder, and my very soul is torn. Not till

¹ Baron Taube, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs, was very intimate with Countess Piper.

to-morrow shall we know the latest eventualities, but my fear is great. Poor unfortunate family! poor King, poor Queen! Why cannot I save them at the cost of my own blood! It would be happiness for me. I should thank Heaven for it. My position is awful, it is unbearable. I, who would have gone to my death for her and her family, I can do nothing for them. Monsters, scoundrels, issued from the dregs of the people, hold them in their power, are perhaps dragging them to torture. The idea drives me mad. I am condemned to powerless regrets. I can only rage in impotence. To think of all their goodness for me overwhelms me. My God, why was I not able to die for them on that 20th June or 10th of August? Nothing would have made me swerve from the duty to which I had sworn my life. It was my glory and my honour. My only aim was to prove it to them to the very end. But I have no more strength left to talk about it, and I do not know how I endure my present position. The restraint I am obliged to practise augments the horror of it. I am not successful in masking it entirely, and the people I meet can see it only too well. Here we are without news. Sometimes six or seven days go by without our receiving any. At present I no longer want news. I am so afraid it may fill up the cup. Adieu! . . .”

The news comes. The cup is filled. A letter from the Bishop of Tours tells him of the execution of Louis XVI. He writes :

“15th February (1793).

“MY DEAR SOPHIE,—You doubtless already know that the King of France is dead. The picture of Louis XVI mounting the scaffold never leaves me. The assassination of two Kings,¹ whose kindness is ever present in my memory, and whose remembrance is dear to me, never ceases to fill

¹ Gustavus III, Louis XVI.

my thoughts, and fear for the fate of the rest of the unfortunate family pierces my soul with the most cruel sorrow. Add to that the bad state of my father's health, the sorrow of being unable to go to him ; I feel a melancholy, a distaste for everything, that I cannot conquer. . . ."

But now a gleam of hope shines in these dark days. Dumouriez has betrayed the Republic. The Jacobins will be beaten. A restoration is possible. Louis XVII will reign. Marie Antoinette will be Regent.

" 5th April (1793).

" MY DEAR SOPHIE,—I hope to go to Brussels in eight or ten days. Events follow one another with great rapidity just now, and we have successes everywhere. I begin to hope for a prompt and happy issue. . . ."

But at Brussels he learns that Dumouriez's defection is far from having the prompt and decisive consequences expected of it.

" *Brussels, May 12, 1793.*

" . . . Unhappily Dumouriez has not been successful in rendering us service of the promised importance, but his defection is nevertheless very important owing to the information he has given and to the disorganisation of the rebel army, deprived of the only man who can lead it. Success will be none the less certain, but it will be postponed, for it needs time to gather together the means of assuring it, and not to expose ourselves to reverses. It is the getting together of means that causes the present inactivity. . . ."

Then, suddenly, the gleam of hope fades before the terrible reality.

" 24th August (1793).

" You doubtless know, my dear Sophie, by this time the dreadful news of the Queen having been moved into the

prison of the Conciergerie, and of the decree of the execrable Convention which delivers her to the revolutionary tribunal for trial. Since this I have been more dead than alive, for to suffer as I suffer is not to live. If I could yet do something towards her deliverance, I think I should suffer less. But to be able to do nothing, that is what is so awful. Taube will tell you the only hope that remains to us and what I have asked. Immediate march on Paris is the only thing to do. But I remain uncertain whether this plan will be adopted and followed. Oh, the horror of having to wait, without doing anything. I would give my life to save her and I am unable to do it! My greatest happiness would be to die for her, and that happiness is refused me. Oh, if only cowardly ruffians had not deprived me of the best of Kings.¹ How I feel all the extent of my loss at this moment! He alone would have been capable of saving her. His great soul would have been fired with the story of her ills, and he would have dared everything to come to her help. But he is no more, and the last hope dies with him. Adieu, my dear Sophie. Pray to God for her, and pity your unhappy brother."

But this request of Fersen for a return to the policy of Gustavus III, and to the alliance of Sweden with Russia, to come to the aid of the Monarchy and save the Queen of France, was not agreed to by the Regent. On the contrary, the Duke of Sudermania allowed himself to be convinced by his powerful minister, Reuterholm, and his ambassador at Paris, de Staël, of the need of relations with the new France. Sweden would gain greatly by being the first to acknowledge the Republic and by renewing her old alliance with France in spite of the changes introduced by the Revolution. M. de Staël, moreover, had the hope that Danton, to obtain the conclusion of this treaty, would grant Sweden,

¹ Gustavus III.

the first ally of Republican France, the lives of the Queen and her children.

The Regent next sought to make Fersen return to Sweden, or else to accept a diplomatic appointment in London, to remove him from their field of activity. Fersen did not yet despair of preventing the turn in Swedish policy, and he was acting in accord with Baron Taube, who threatened to resign his Ministry of Foreign Affairs rather than endorse it. Fersen begged his sister to intervene with the Duchess of Sudermania to prevent his recall at least.

“Taube will tell you what I want, and do you do your best for me; but remember, dearest friend, that I neither can nor will abandon her nor go far from her. Honour, attachment, sentiment, bind me to her service, and I will not fail her. Adieu! . . .”

And he stays, his ear bent on Paris, anxiously following the varying fortunes of the war, dreaming of new schemes, new attempts to get Marie Antoinette out of her prison. Nothing will make him waver in his self-imposed task. His father is seriously ill; his sister writes that he must return, would he see him again in this world; he will not return.

“*4th September 1793.*”

“I have received your last letter from Ljung,¹ my dear Sophie. My father’s condition affects me very sensibly, and the thought of losing him is an incessant pain to me. . . . I cannot leave just now. We have no news of the unhappy Queen, and are reduced to hoping that it may be a good sign. What an awful position! I am always thinking of her. I cannot forgive myself even the very air I breathe when I think that she is shut up in a horrible prison. That idea cuts me to the heart, and I am torn between rage and pain. . . .”

¹ His father’s house, where Countess Piper had hastened to his bedside.

Round him in Brussels, in the emigrants' camp, they try to persuade themselves that the King having paid the debt for all, the Queen and her children and Madame Elizabeth will be spared. He repeats the assurances he hears on all sides, without daring to believe them.

" 8th September.

"I have received, my dear friend, your letter of August 22nd. Yes, I am very much to be pitied, for my sorrow and my anxiety are perpetual. I cannot feel reassured about the fate of the Queen and her unfortunate family. Nearly everyone here seems to me to appear reassured. Their arguments seem good, I employ them myself—without succeeding in persuading myself. Can one expect anything reasonable and human from madmen and maniacs like these scoundrels? I cannot be lured by the fond hope of seeing them follow any path but that of their own cruel and ferocious instincts. At times I fear that they who are lulled by such hopes have not the same vital interest as I, and deceive themselves knowingly, and it is my heart that leads me to see more clearly. Few people knew them as I did, and few knew how to appreciate them for their true worth. You ask me if there are not enough good men in Paris to do what is necessary to save them. There are certainly some, even perhaps the greater number, but they are held back by fear. Only the villains are bold. They rule as despots, and the others fear them and submit. That is what has happened since the Revolution. It enrages me not to be able to do anything. It is no comfort to me to know I have done what I could. Would I could give my life for them. I would lay it down with joy. The Queen's condition makes my blood boil. Alone, in the vilest of prisons, separated from all she holds dear, given up to all the horrors of her position. That picture is always before my eyes. We have made secret attempts

to come to her rescue. Could they but succeed ! Taube will tell you what they are. But our means are very weak. How can Providence permit such crimes ? May it listen to our prayers and vows. Good-bye, my dear Sophie. Continue to love your brother, who is very unhappy."

But the tentatives made to get at the Queen and help her to escape only made her position worse. She herself begs that they shall not be renewed. She will never consent to escape without her family, and it is beyond possibility that they could all succeed in escaping at once. Fersen is obliged to renounce his attempts. He trembles when he hears that yet another one has been made without his knowledge that was nearly fatal to the unhappy prisoner.

" 15th September.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Our anxieties about the Queen are always the same. They have increased during the last three days. They accused a man called Michonis of writing to her to offer to save her. That has turned me cold with fear, and I have felt my fears and suffering worse than ever. However, it came to nothing, and I am a little easier without, however, being any more hopeful. For I see in the accusation merely a pretext to open her trial. I am sure that they have no proofs, but what does that matter when we have to do with villains who manufacture proofs when they have none ! I live in a state of anxiety and apprehension. And each day renews it."

Indeed, events were hurrying on. The great drama was nearing its end, and on the 14th October the Queen is dragged before the Revolutionary Tribunal ; on the 16th is condemned to the guillotine. The day after, she mounts the fatal cart which takes her to the scaffold, where she suffers death. The news comes in to Fersen with blow

after blow. He writes to his sister, death in his heart, almost wandering :

“MY DEAR LOVING SOPHIE,—Oh, pity me, pity me ! The state I am in only you can conceive. I have lost everything in the world. You alone are left to me. Oh ! do not abandon me. She who was my happiness, she for whom I lived—yes, my dear Sophie, never have I ceased to love her. No—I could not ; never for a moment could I cease to love her, for her I would have sacrificed all in all. Well do I feel it now. She, whom I loved so well, for whom I would have given a thousand lives, is no more. Oh, my God ! Why overwhelm me thus ? What have I done to deserve Your anger ? She lives no longer ! My cup is full to the brim, and I do not know how I am to live and bear my sorrow. It is such that nothing can ever wipe it out. I shall always have her image before me and in me ; the memory of all that she was to weep over for ever.

“All is over for me. Why did I not die by her side ? Why could I not spill my blood for her, for them ? I should not have had to drag out an existence that will be perpetual pain and eternal regret. My heart will bleed henceforth as long as it beats. You alone can feel what I suffer, and I need your tenderness. Weep with me, my gentle Sophie. Let us weep for them. I have not the strength to write more. I have just received the terrible confirmation of the execution. Nothing is said of the rest of the family, but my fear is terrible. Oh, my God ! save them ! Have pity on me ! ”

His father died on the 24th April 1794. He did not return to Sweden to receive his last breath. He is busy carrying out Marie Antoinette's last wishes, and forwarding her last messages to the brothers of Louis XVI. For,

how could he return to Sweden while the Regent and his powerful minister, Reuterholm, follow their policy of *rapprochement* with the Revolution? It would be treating with "her assassins." In answer to his sister's letter, telling him of their father's death, he writes :

"I see that I can but resign myself to a loss very near my heart, and one which cruelly reopens that of her whom I shall regret all my life. The idea of not having seen my good father in his last moments seems to increase my grief. I know too well the cost of losing those last words, of not being present at the last with those who are dear to us. I have had bitter enough experience, and it tears my heart yet to think of it. . . ."

And so all sorrows are mingled, are lost in the thought of her who possesses his soul.

But the coming of the Terror in France prevented the projected Alliance with the Republic. The treaty concluded with Danton and Lebrun is not ratified under Robespierre. Staël, who negotiated it, is obliged to flee from Paris and take refuge with his wife at Coppet. The *rapprochement* with France is postponed for the time. The Regent then tries again to conciliate Fersen. He charges the Comtesse Piper to assure him of her goodwill, and Fersen replies :

"I received, my dear friend, your letter of the 5th, and I am replying to the Duke to-day. Here is my letter, which you are to give him, as it was you he commissioned, or you can give it to Taube for him, as you please.

"I was very glad, as you were, of what the Duke told you. I thank him for his kindness, and I have told him that I will take advantage of it some day, but at the moment I have but the power of feeling pain and regret and no power of forming any wish. I will ask for his goodwill when my mind is calmer. At the moment I only ask to remain here

and follow the movements of the war. I have put much feeling and gratitude for his kindness to me in my letter. . . . I do not speak to you, my dear friend, of the state of my heart. It is always the same. To think of her, to regret her, therein lies my consolation ; to seek all I can find of hers and make it my treasure ; that is all I care for. To speak intimately, therein lies my peace. Her loss will be the sorrow of my whole life. Never have I felt the value of all that I possessed, and never have I loved her so well.

“ I do not tell you of my plans either ; I have none ; I feel incapable of making them. Her children still are a cause of anxiety to me, their fate torments me. That unfortunate daughter, what will she become ? What horror, what humiliation will she not have to submit to ? The son—what will he do ? My heart aches in thinking of it. My God, will You not put a limit to such suffering, will You not punish so many crimes ? Good-bye, my gentle Sophie. I finish because I only increase your sorrow with my own. Always continue to love and pity your unhappy brother.”

He returned to Sweden only in 1796, at the time of Gustavus IV's accession to the throne, who made him *Grand Maréchal* of the kingdom. But he went first to Vienna to kneel before Madame Royale, and pay homage to the daughter of his friend.

CONCLUSION

ACHIVALROUS love, as profound as it was ideal and disinterested, a devotion without limits, made up of tenderness and admiration, of compassion for undeserved unhappiness, for suffering valiantly borne—this is what these letters of Fersen to his sister show us on the subject of Marie Antoinette. He loved the Queen with passion, without one disloyal or sensual thought that could dim the flame of a love worthy of the troubadours and the Knights of the Round Table. Marie Antoinette loved him in the same way, without ever forgetting her duty as a wife and her dignity as a Queen.

For him, she wore an aureole on her brow. For her, he was the Knight without fear and without reproach, who wore her colours, ready to defend her, lance in hand, against all comers; the tried friend, to whom one could confide everything, on whose devotion one could count at every moment.

She had but one fear : that he would sacrifice his life to save her. He had but one regret : that he had not died for her on that twentieth of June, or on that tenth of August.

What their life was when they were able to be together, in the peaceful and happy times at Versailles ; as later, in the midst of the storms of the Revolution ; what Fersen's efforts were to shield her from the tempest, to snatch her from outrage, prison and death ; what his anguish and despair were during the tragic drama—all this his letters to his sister tell us. That sister, the gentle and loving

Comtesse Piper, was his only confidante, the only one to whom he could open his heart and confide the secret of his love. The words of his confession attest the depth as well as the purity of his feelings.

The Queen's correspondence with the leaders of the Constitutional party of the Assembly reveals, on the other hand, a Marie Antoinette who is not less different from the conception that is generally held of the Queen of France. The picture that generally presents itself to our minds, when we evoke her memory, is that of a young Queen, as light as she is good, as careless as she is beautiful, as avid of pleasure as she is for the chance to devote herself to her friends; or the sublime woman, of heroic courage, with the saint's greatness of soul, who walks her calvary from the Temple to the Conciergerie, and from the Revolutionary Tribunal to the scaffold.

This correspondence with Barnave shows us a third phase of her character. We find in her a politician of an alert intelligence, firm and virile, of sure and practical judgment, who knows how to master her feelings, who has the courage to run counter to the tradition in which she has been brought up, with the object of saving the ancient French Monarchy in bending it to new ideas.

As she tells us herself, she saw therein "a duty to fulfil," and she is ready to sacrifice what she calls "her prejudices," her personal feeling, her love of tradition and her reactionary instincts to accomplish this duty; she rallies to the Constitution, which is the "wish of the nation" to save the King and his people, for "these two are but one."

If she failed in this task, if she was carried away by the storm which she hoped to allay, it was because the extreme parties, the only two who acted and knew what they wanted, fought equally against her work: those at home to destroy the Monarchy and to replace it by the Republic, those

abroad to restore the ancient régime and uphold the privileges of the nobility and of the clergy. Reacting on one another, they rendered her task impossible, they reduced her work to nothing—to end, the one in foreign invasion, the other in the Terror. Between the two the poor Queen and her opportunist friends, as well as their Constitutional Monarchy, were swept like straws before the wind.

If, after the collapse of her hopes of conciliation and peaceful solution, before the rising flood of the Revolution, the growing dangers that threatened her life, and that of the King and of her children, Marie Antoinette let herself be persuaded by Fersen that henceforth foreign intervention was the only means of possible salvation—who can blame her? To save the King and her children from the tyranny of the Jacobins, from the frenzy of the sections and the threats of the mob, was now all she could hope for. After that she had no other thought. The King refusing to seek refuge from danger by a new escape from Paris, there was nothing to be done but to wait for help from the outside for their deliverance.

It was on this sole hope that she pinned her faith for the future: "Something within me tells me that we shall be saved." Surely the help will not be long in coming. "The part we are playing will give us, I hope, the time to wait till help comes, but the weeks will be very long." It is rather the wife and mother than the Queen who speaks thus. Her work as Queen had foundered in the storm; the Mother would save her nearest from prison and from death.

This is not to say that the attempt she made to reconcile the Monarchy with the Revolution, to satisfy the desire of the nation for a Constitutional Monarchy as a happy mean between the old régime and the Republic, was not undertaken in all sincerity and without ulterior thought. The widespread opinion that Marie Antoinette's relations with

the Constitutional party were merely a comedy played to cover the intrigues of the Court with the emigrants and the foreigners, cannot hold good against the evidence borne by these letters. They bear the stamp of good faith and sincerity. Even as those of Fersen, in point of sentiment, so this correspondence of Marie Antoinette with Barnave and his friends, in what it shows us of her political attitude, is all to the honour of the unfortunate Queen.

THE END

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